
HENRY JAMES JR.

ROMANCE OF CERTAIN
OLD CLOTHES

A MOST EXTRAORDINARY
CASE


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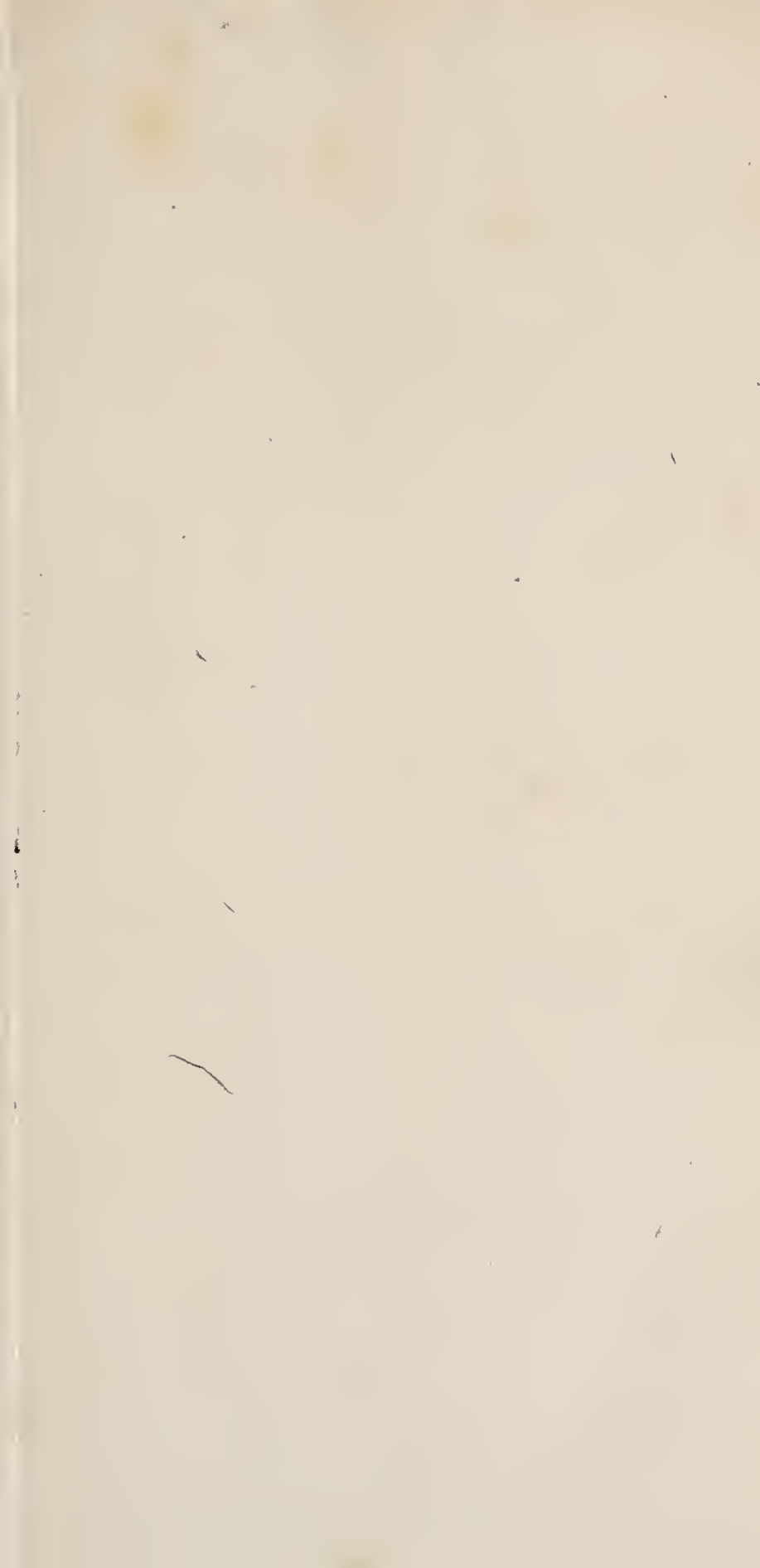
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Henry James, Jr.

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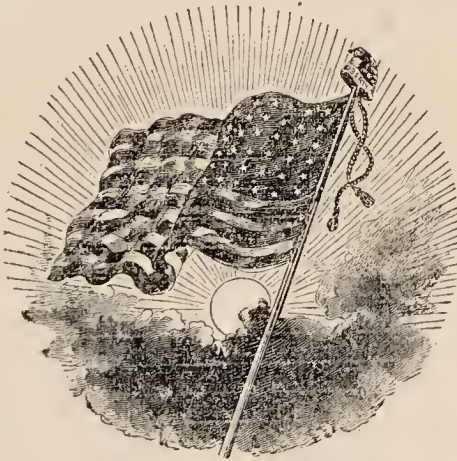
THE

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smile had lighted up his face again, and showed the victory won.

We turned our backs upon the gale and walked again to the missionary's hut; and as we went along, Rolfson, speaking gently, said: "Ah, my friend, you have seen me exhibit a weakness for which I need offer no apology, for I cannot be ashamed of it. It was but human, and was caused by the mere circumstance of your coming here, as I have already said, fresh from a world that I thought I had forgotten. How little I had forgotten it I thank you for having shown me. Come," and he put his arm within my own, "let us hasten home. And since we have had our enjoyment of the storm, let it blow itself to pieces as it will; and while it blows, you shall mingle with the wailing wind the story of my life."

As we neared the hut, the gale blowing now even more fiercely than before, I said to Rolfson, "While the storm is

raging so, have you any fears for Doctor Molke in his boat?"

"What! fears for Molke, in his boat or anywhere!" exclaimed the missionary, as if the question took him by surprise, and had been no more thought of than that he himself should work a miracle,—“fears for Molke, no; I have no fears for Doctor Molke at any time or in any place. Danger and Doctor Molke seem to have parted company long ago. The one is to the other as water to the feathers of a swan. At the present moment I dare say he is having a right royal supper in some safe place; or *if* in danger, you may be sure that he will light upon his feet with not a feather ruffled, or a muscle of his genial face disturbed, or one pulsation added in the hour. Fears for him? why, I never thought of such a thing. No, indeed! no fears for him! no fears for Doctor Molke in the storm or anywhere!"

THE ROMANCE OF CERTAIN OLD CLOTHES.

TOWARD the middle of the eighteenth century there lived in the Province of Massachusetts a widowed gentlewoman, the mother of three children. Her name is of little account: I shall take the liberty of calling her Mrs. Willoughby,—a name, like her own, of a highly respectable sound. She had been left a widow after some six years of marriage, and had devoted herself to the care of her children. These latter grew up in a manner to reward her tender care and to gratify her fondest hopes. The first-born was a son, whom she had called Bernard, after his father. The others were daughters,—born at an interval of three years apart. Good looks were traditional in the family, and these young persons were not likely to allow the tradition to perish. The boy was of that fair and ruddy complexion and of that athletic mould which in

those days (as in these) were the sign of genuine English blood,—a frank, affectionate young fellow, a capital son and brother, and a steadfast friend. Clever, however, he was not; the wit of the family had been apportioned chiefly to his sisters. Mr. Willoughby had been a great reader of Shakespeare, at a time when this pursuit implied more penetration of mind than at the present day, and in a community where it required much courage to patronize the drama even in the closet; and he had wished to record his admiration of the great poet by calling his daughters out of his favorite plays. Upon the elder he had bestowed the charming name of Viola; and upon the younger, the more serious one of Perdita, in memory of a little girl born between them, who had lived but a few weeks.

When Bernard Willoughby came to his sixteenth year, his mother put a brave face upon it, and prepared to execute her husband's last request. This had been an earnest entreaty that, at the proper age, his son should be sent out to England, there to complete his education at the University of Oxford, which had been the seat of his own studies. Mrs. Willoughby valued her son three times as much as she did her two daughters together; but she valued her husband's wishes more. So she swallowed her sobs, and made up her boy's trunk and his simple provincial outfit, and sent him on his way across the seas. Bernard was entered at his father's college, and spent five years in England, without great honor, indeed, but with a vast deal of pleasure and no discredit. On leaving the University he made the journey to France. In his twenty-third year he took ship for home, prepared to find poor little New England (New England was very small in those days) an utterly intolerable place of abode. But there had been changes at home, as well as in Mr. Bernard's opinions. He found his mother's house quite habitable, and his sisters grown into two very charming young ladies, with all the accomplishments and graces of the young women of Britain, and a certain native-grown gentle *brusquerie* and wildness, which, if it was not an accomplishment, was certainly a grace the more. Bernard privately assured his mother that his sisters were fully a match for the most genteel young women in England; whereupon poor Mrs. Willoughby quite came into conceit of her daughters. Such was Bernard's opinion, and such, in a tenfold higher degree, was the opinion of Mr. Arthur Lloyd. This gentleman, I hasten to add, was a college-mate of Mr. Bernard, a young man of reputable family, of a good person and a handsome inheritance; which latter appurtenance he prepared to invest in trade in this country. He and Bernard were warm friends; they had crossed the ocean together, and the young American had lost no time in presenting him-

at his mother's house, where he had made quite as good an impression as that which he had received, and of which I have just given a hint.

The two sisters were at this time in all the freshness of their youthful bloom; each wearing, of course, this natural brilliancy in the manner that became her best. They were equally dissimilar in appearance and character. Viola, the elder, — now in her twenty-second year, — was tall and fair, with calm gray eyes and auburn tresses; a very faint likeness to the Viola of Shakespeare's comedy, whom I imagine as a brunette (if you will), but a slender, airy creature, full of the softest and finest emotions. Miss Willoughby, with her rich, fair skin, her fine arms, her majestic height, and her slow utterance, was not cut out for adventures. She would never have put on a man's jacket and hose; and, indeed, being a very plump beauty, it is perhaps as well that she would n't. Perdita, too, might very well have exchanged the sweet melancholy of her name against something more in consonance with her aspect and disposition. She was a positive brunette, short of stature, light of foot, with dark brown eyes full of fire and animation. She had been from her childhood a creature of smiles and gayety; and so far from making you wait for an answer to your speech, as her handsome sister was wont to do (while she gazed at you with her somewhat cold gray eyes), she had given you the choice of half a dozen, suggested by the successive clauses of your proposition, before you had got to the end of it.

The young girls were very glad to see their brother once more; but they found themselves quite able to maintain a reserve of good-will for their brother's friend. Among the young men their friends and neighbors, the *belle jeunesse* of the Colony, there were many excellent fellows, several devoted swains, and some two or three who enjoyed the reputation of universal charmers and conquerors. But the home-bred arts and the somewhat boisterous gallantry of these honest young colo-

nists were completely eclipsed by the good looks, the fine clothes, the respectful *empressement*, the perfect elegance, the immense information, of Mr. Arthur Lloyd. He was in reality no paragon; he was an honest, resolute, intelligent young man, rich in pounds sterling, in his health and comfortable hopes, and his little capital of uninvested affections. But he was a gentleman; he had a handsome face; he had studied and travelled; he spoke French, he played on the flute, and he read verses aloud with very great taste. There were a dozen reasons why Miss Willoughby and her sister should forthwith have been rendered fastidious in the choice of their male acquaintance. The imagination of women is especially adapted to the various little conventions and mysteries of polite society. Mr. Lloyd's talk told our little New England maidens a vast deal more of the ways and means of people of fashion in European capitals than he had any idea of doing. It was delightful to sit by and hear him and Bernard discourse upon the fine people and fine things they had seen. They would all gather round the fire after tea, in the little wainscoted parlor, — quite innocent then of any intention of being picturesque or of being anything else, indeed, than economical, and saving the expense of stamped papers and tapestries, — and the two young men would remind each other, across the rug, of this, that, and the other adventure. Viola and Perdita would often have given their ears to know exactly what adventure it was, and where it happened, and who was there, and what the ladies had on; but in those days a well-bred young woman was not expected to break into the conversation of her own movement or to ask too many questions; and the poor girls used therefore to sit fluttering behind the more languid — or more discreet — curiosity of their mother.

That they were both very nice girls Arthur Lloyd was not slow to discover; but it took him some time to satisfy himself as to the balance of their charms.

He had a strong presentiment — an emotion of a nature entirely too cheerful to be called a foreboding — that he was destined to marry one of them; yet he was unable to arrive at a preference, and for such a consummation a preference was certainly indispensable, inasmuch as Lloyd was quite too much of a young man to reconcile himself to the idea of making a choice by lot and being cheated of the heavenly delight of falling in love. He resolved to take things easily, and to let his heart speak. Meanwhile, he was on a very pleasant footing. Mrs. Willoughby showed a dignified indifference to his "intentions," equally remote from a carelessness of her daughters' honor and from that hideous alacrity to make him commit himself, which, in his quality of a young man of property, he had but too often encountered in the venerable dames of his native islands. As for Bernard, all that he asked was that his friend should take his sisters as his own; and as for the fair creatures themselves, however each may have secretly longed for the monopoly of Mr. Lloyd's attentions, they observed a very decent and modest and contented demeanor.

Towards each other, however, they were somewhat more on the offensive. They were good sisterly friends, betwixt whom it would take more than a day for the seeds of jealousy to sprout and bear fruit; but the young girls felt that the seeds had been sown on the day that Mr. Lloyd came into the house. Each made up her mind that, if she should be slighted, she would bear her grief in silence, and that no one should be any the wiser; for if they had a great deal of love, they had also a great deal of pride. But each prayed in secret, nevertheless, that upon *her* the glory might fall. They had need of a vast deal of patience, of self-control, and of dissimulation. In those days a young girl of decent breeding could make no advances whatever, and barely respond, indeed, to those that were made. She was expected to sit still in her chair with her eyes on the carpet, watching the spot where the mystic handkerchief should

fall. Poor Arthur Lloyd was obliged to undertake his wooing in the little wainscoted parlor, before the eyes of Mrs. Willoughby, her son, and his prospective sister-in-law. But youth and love are so cunning that a hundred little signs and tokens might travel to and fro, and not one of these three pair of eyes detect them in their passage. The young girls had but one chamber and one bed between them, and for long hours together they were under each other's direct inspection. That each knew that she was being watched, however, made not a grain of difference in those little offices which they mutually rendered, or in the various household tasks which they performed in common. Neither flinched nor fluttered beneath the silent batteries of her sister's eyes. The only apparent change in their habits was that they had less to say to each other. It was impossible to talk about Mr. Lloyd, and it was ridiculous to talk about anything else. By tacit agreement they began to wear all their choice finery, and to devise such little implements of coquetry, in the way of ribbons and top-knots and furbelows as were sanctioned by indubitable modesty. They executed in the same inarticulate fashion a little agreement of sincerity on these delicate matters. "Is it better so?" Viola would ask, tying a bunch of ribbons on her bosom, and turning about from her glass to her sister. Perdita would look up gravely from her work, and examine the decoration. "I think you had better give it another loop," she would say, with great solemnity, looking hard at her sister with eyes that added, "upon my honor." So they were forever stitching and trimming their petticoats, and pressing out their muslins, and contriving washes and ointments and cosmetics, like the ladies in the household of the Vicar of Wakefield. Some three or four months went by; it grew to be midwinter, and as yet Viola knew that if Perdita had nothing more to boast of than she, there was not much to be feared from her rivalry. But Perdita by this time, the charming Perdita,

felt that her secret had grown to be tenfold more precious than her sister's.

One afternoon Miss Willoughby sat alone before her toilet-glass, combing out her long hair. It was getting too dark to see; she lit the two candles in their sockets, on the frame of her mirror, and then went to the window to draw her curtains. It was a gray December evening; the landscape was bare and bleak, and the sky heavy with snow-clouds. At the end of the long garden into which her window looked was a wall with a little postern door, opening into a lane. The door stood ajar, as she could vaguely see in the gathering darkness, and moved slowly to and fro, as if some one were swaying it from the lane without. It was doubtless a servant-maid. But as she was about to drop her curtain, Viola saw her sister step within the garden, and hurry along the path toward the house. She dropped the curtain, all save a little crevice for her eyes. As Perdita came up the path, she seemed to be examining something in her hand, holding it close to her eyes. When she reached the house she stopped a moment, looked intently at the object, and pressed it to her lips.

Poor Viola slowly came back to her chair, and sat down before her glass, where, if she had looked at it less abstractedly, she would have seen her handsome features sadly disfigured by jealousy. A moment afterwards, the door opened behind her, and her sister came into the room, out of breath, and her cheeks aglow with the chilly air.

Perdita started. "Ah," said she, "I thought you were with mamma." The ladies were to go to a tea-party, and on such occasions it was the habit of one of the young girls to help their mother to dress. Instead of coming in, Perdita lingered at the door.

"Come in, come in," said Viola. "We've more than an hour yet. I should like you very much to give a few strokes to my hair." She knew that her sister wished to retreat, and that she could see in the glass all her movements in the room. "Nay, just

help me with my hair," she said, "and I'll go to mamma."

Perdita came reluctantly, and took the brush. She saw her sister's eyes, in the glass, fastened hard upon her hands. She had not made three passes, when Viola clapped her own right hand upon her sister's left, and started out of her chair. "Whose ring is that?" she cried, passionately, drawing her towards the light.

On the young girl's third finger glinted a little gold ring, adorned with a couple of small rubies. Perdita felt that she need no longer keep her secret, yet that she must put a bold face on her avowal. "It's mine," she said proudly.

"Who gave it to you?" cried the other.

Perdita hesitated a moment. "Mr. Lloyd."

"Mr. Lloyd is generous, all of a sudden."

"Ah no," cried Perdita, with spirit, "not all of a sudden. He offered it to me a month ago."

"And you needed a month's begging to take it?" said Viola, looking at the little trinket; which indeed was not especially elegant, although it was the best that the jeweller of the Province could furnish. "I should n't have taken it in less than two."

"It is n't the ring," said Perdita, "it's what it means!"

"It means that you're not a modest girl," cried Viola. "Pray does mamma know of your conduct? does Bernard?"

"Mamma has approved my 'conduct,' as you call it. Mr. Lloyd has asked my hand, and mamma has given it. Would you have had him apply to you, sister?"

Viola gave her sister a long look, full of passionate envy and sorrow. Then she dropped her lashes on her pale cheeks, and turned away. Perdita felt that it had not been a pretty scene; but it was her sister's fault. But the elder girl rapidly called back her pride, and turned herself about again. "You have my very best wishes," she said with a low courtesy. "I wish you every happiness, and a very long life."

Perdita gave a bitter laugh. "Don't speak in that tone," she cried. "I'd rather you cursed me outright. Come, sister," she added, "he could n't marry both of us."

"I wish you very great joy," Viola repeated mechanically, sitting down to her glass again, "and a very long life, and plenty of children."

There was something in the sound of these words not at all to Perdita's taste. "Will you give me a year, at least?" she said. "In a year I can have one little boy, — or one little girl at least. If you'll give me your brush again, I'll do your hair."

"Thank you," said Viola. "You had better go to mamma. It is n't proper that a young lady with a promised husband should wait on a girl with none."

"Nay," said Perdita, good-humoredly, "I have Arthur to wait upon me. You need my service more than I need yours."

But her sister motioned her away, and she left the room. When she had gone, poor Viola fell on her knees before her dressing-table, buried her head in her arms, and poured out a flood of tears and sobs. She felt very much the better for this effusion of sorrow. When her sister came back, she insisted upon helping her to dress, and upon her wearing her prettiest things. She forced upon her acceptance a bit of lace of her own, and declared that now that she was to be married she should do her best to appear worthy of her lover's choice. She discharged these offices in stern silence; but, such as they were, they had to do duty as an apology and an atonement; she never made any other.

Now that Lloyd was received by the family as an accepted suitor, nothing remained but to fix the wedding-day. It was appointed for the following April, and in the interval preparations were diligently made for the marriage. Lloyd, on his side, was busy with his commercial arrangements, and with establishing a correspondence with the great mercantile house to which he

had attached himself in England. He was therefore not so frequent a visitor at Mrs. Willoughby's as during the months of his diffidence and irresolution, and poor Viola had less to suffer than she had feared from the sight of the mutual endearments of the young lovers. Touching his future sister-in-law Lloyd had a perfectly clear conscience. There had not been a particle of sentiment uttered between them, and he had not the slightest suspicion that she coveted anything more than his fraternal regard. He was quite at his ease; life promised so well, both domestically and financially. The lurid clouds of revolution were as yet twenty years beneath the horizon, and that his connubial felicity should take a tragic turn it was absurd, it was blasphemous, to apprehend. Meanwhile at Mrs. Willoughby's there was a greater rustling of silks, a more rapid clicking of scissors, and flying of needles than ever. Mrs. Willoughby had determined that her daughter should carry from home the most elegant outfit that her money could buy, or that the country could furnish. All the sage women in the county were convened, and their united taste was brought to bear on Perdita's wardrobe. Viola's situation, at this moment, was assuredly not to be envied. The poor girl had an inordinate love of dress, and the very best taste in the world, as her sister perfectly well knew. Viola was tall, she was full and stately, she was made to carry stiff brocade and masses of heavy lace, such as belong to the toilet of a rich man's wife. But Viola sat aloof, with her beautiful arms folded and her head averted, while her mother and sister and the venerable women aforesaid worried and wondered over their materials, oppressed by the multitude of their resources. One day there came in a beautiful piece of white silk, brocaded with heavenly blue and silver, sent by the bridegroom himself,—it not being thought amiss in those days that the husband elect should contribute to the bride's *trousseau*. Perdita was quite at loss to imagine a

pattern and trimmings which should do sufficient honor to the splendor of the material.

"Blue's your color, sister, more than mine," she said with appealing eyes. "It's a pity it's not for you. You'd know what to do with it."

Viola got up from her place, and looked at the great shining fabric as it lay spread over the back of a chair. Then she took it up in her hands and felt it,—lovingly, as Perdita could see,—and turned about toward the mirror with it. She let it roll down to her feet, and flung the other end over her shoulder, gathering it in about her waist with her white arm bare to the elbow. She threw back her head, and looked at her image, and a hanging tress of her auburn hair fell upon the gorgeous surface of the silk. It made a dazzling picture. The women standing about uttered a little "Ah!" of admiration. "Yes, indeed," said Viola, quietly, "blue is my color." But Perdita could see that her fancy had been stirred, and that she would now fall to work and solve all their silken riddles. And indeed she behaved very well, as Perdita, knowing her insatiable love of millinery, was quite ready to declare. Yards and yards of lovely silks and satins, of muslins, velvets, and laces, passed through her cunning hands, without a word of envy coming from her lips. Thanks to her efforts, when the wedding-day came Perdita was prepared to espouse more of the vanities of life than any fluttering young bride who had yet challenged the sacramental blessing of a New England divine.

It had been arranged that the young couple should go out and spend the first days of their wedded life at the country house of an English gentleman,—a man of rank, and a very kind friend to Lloyd. He was an unmarried man; he professed himself delighted to withdraw and leave them for a week to their billing and cooing. After the ceremony at church,—it had been performed by an English priest,—young Mrs. Lloyd hastened back to her mother's house to change her wedding gear for a riding-dress.

Viola helped her to effect the change, in the little old room in which they had been fond sisters together. Perdita then hurried off to bid farewell to her mother, leaving Viola to follow. The parting was short; the horses were at the door, and Arthur impatient to start. But Viola had not followed, and Perdita hastened back to her room, opening the door abruptly. Viola, as usual, was before the glass, but in a position which caused the other to stand still, amazed. She had dressed herself in Perdita's cast-off wedding veil and wreath, and on her neck she had hung the heavy string of pearls which the young girl had received from her husband as a wedding-gift. These things had been hastily laid aside, to await their possessor's disposal on her return from the country. Bedizened in this unnatural garb, Viola stood at the mirror, plunging a long look into its depths, and reading Heaven knows what audacious visions. Perdita was shocked and pained. It was a hideous image of their old rivalry come to life again. She made a step toward her sister, as if to pull off the veil and the flowers. But catching her eyes in the glass, she stopped.

"Farewell, Viola," she said. "You might at least have waited till I had got out of the house." And she hurried away from the room.

Mr. Lloyd had purchased in Boston a house which, in the taste of those days, was considered a marvel of elegance and comfort; and here he very soon established himself with his young wife. He was thus separated by a distance of twenty miles from the residence of his mother-in-law. Twenty miles in that primitive era of roads and conveyances were as good as a hundred at the present day, and Mrs. Willoughby saw but little of her daughter during the first twelvemonth of her marriage. She suffered in no small degree from her absence; and her affliction was not diminished by the fact that Viola had fallen into a spiritless and languid state, which made change of scene and of air essential to her restoration. The

real cause of the young girl's dejection the reader will not be slow to suspect. Mrs. Willoughby and her gossips, however, deemed her complaint a purely physical one, and doubted not that she would obtain relief from the remedy just mentioned. Her mother accordingly proposed on her behalf a visit to certain relatives on the paternal side, established in New York, who had long complained that they were able to see so little of their New England cousins. Viola was despatched to these good people, under a suitable escort, and remained with them for several months. In the interval her brother Bernard, who had begun the practice of the law, made up his mind to take a wife. Viola came home to the wedding, apparently cured of her heartache, with honest roses and lilies in her face, and a proud smile on her lips. Arthur Lloyd came over from Boston to see his brother-in-law married, but without his wife, who was expecting shortly to be confined. It was nearly a year since Viola had seen him. She was glad—she hardly knew why—that Perdita had stayed at home. Arthur looked happy, but he was more grave and solemn than before his marriage. She thought he looked "interesting,"—for although the word in its modern sense was not then invented, we may be sure that the idea was. The truth is, he was simply preoccupied with his wife's condition. Nevertheless he by no means failed to observe Viola's beauty and splendor, and how she quite effaced the poor little bride. The allowance that Perdita had enjoyed for her dress had now been transferred to her sister, who certainly made the most of it. On the morning after the wedding, he had a lady's saddle put on the horse of the servant who had come with him from town, and went out with the young girl for a ride. It was a keen, clear morning in January; the ground was bare and hard, and the horses in good condition,—to say nothing of Viola, who was charming in her hat and plume, and her dark blue riding-coat, trimmed with fur. They rode all the morning, they lost their way, and were

obliged to stop for dinner at a farmhouse. The early winter dusk had fallen when they got home. Mrs. Willoughby met them with a long face. A messenger had arrived at noon from Mrs. Lloyd; she was beginning to be ill, and desired her husband's immediate return. The young man swore at the thought that he had lost several hours, and that by hard riding he might already have been with his wife. He barely consented to stop for a mouthful of supper, but mounted the messenger's horse and started off at a gallop.

He reached home at midnight. His wife had been delivered of a little girl. "Ah, why were n't you with me?" she said, as he came to her bedside.

"I was out of the house when the man came. I was with Viola," said Lloyd, innocently.

Mrs. Lloyd made a little moan, and turned about. But she continued to do very well, and for a week her improvement was uninterrupted. Finally, however, through some excess of diet or of exposure, it was checked, and the poor lady grew rapidly worse. Lloyd was in despair. It very soon became evident that the relapse was fatal. Mrs. Lloyd came to a sense of her approaching end, and declared that she was reconciled with death. On the third evening after the change took place she told her husband that she felt she would not outlast the night. She dismissed her servants, and also requested her mother to withdraw, — Mrs. Willoughby having arrived on the preceding day. She had had her infant placed on the bed beside her, and she lay on her side, with the child against her breast, holding her husband's hands. The night-lamp was hidden behind the heavy curtains of the bed, but the room was illumined with a red glow from the immense fire of logs on the hearth.

"It seems strange to die by such a fire as that," the young woman said, feebly trying to smile. "If I had but a little of such fire in my veins! But I've given it all to this little spark of

mortality." And she dropped her eyes on her child. Then raising them she looked at her husband with a long penetrating gaze. The last feeling which lingered in her heart was one of mistrust. She had not recovered from the shock which Arthur had given her by telling her that in the hour of her agony he had been with Viola. She trusted her husband very nearly as well as she loved him; but now that she was called away forever, she felt a cold horror of her sister. She felt in her soul that Viola had never ceased to envy her good fortune; and a year of happy security had not effaced the young girl's image, dressed in her wedding garments, and smiling with fancied triumph. Now that Arthur was to be alone, what might not Viola do? She was beautiful, she was engaging; what arts might she not use, what impression might she not make upon the young man's melancholy heart? Mrs. Lloyd looked at her husband in silence. It seemed hard, after all, to doubt of his constancy. His fine eyes were filled with tears; his face was convulsed with weeping; the clasp of his hands was warm and passionate. How noble he looked, how tender, how faithful and devoted! "Nay," thought Perdita, "he's not for such as Viola. He'll never forget me. Nor does Viola truly care for him; she cares only for vanities and finery and jewels." And she dropped her eyes on her white hands, which her husband's liberality had covered with rings, and on the lace ruffles which trimmed the edge of her night-dress. "She covets my rings and my laces more than she covets my husband."

At this moment the thought of her sister's rapacity seemed to cast a dark shadow between her and the helpless figure of her little girl. "Arthur," she said, "you must take off my rings. I shall not be buried in them. One of these days my daughter shall wear them, — my rings and my laces and silks. I had them all brought out and shown me to-day. It's a great wardrobe, — there's not such another

in the Province ; I can say it without vanity now that I've done with it. It will be a great inheritance for my daughter, when she grows into a young woman. There are things there that a man never buys twice, and if they're lost you'll never again see the like. So you'll watch them well. Some dozen things I've left to Viola ; I've named them to my mother. I've given her that blue and silver ; it was meant for her ; I wore it only once, I looked ill in it. But the rest are to be sacredly kept for this little innocent. It's such a providence that she should be my color ; she can wear my gowns ; she has her mother's eyes. You know the same fashions come back every twenty years. She can wear my gowns as they are. They'll lie there quietly waiting till she grows into them, — wrapped in camphor and rose-leaves, and keeping their colors in the sweet-scented darkness. She shall have black hair, she shall wear my carnation satin. Do you promise me, Arthur ? ”

“ Promise you what, dearest ? ”

“ Promise me to keep your poor little wife's old gowns. ”

“ Are you afraid I'll sell them ? ”

“ No, but that they may get scattered. My mother will have them properly wrapped up, and you shall lay them away under a double-lock. Do you know the great chest in the attic, with the iron bands ? There's no end to what it will hold. You can lay them all there. My mother and the housekeeper will do it, and give you the key. And you'll keep the key in your secretary, and never give it to any one but your child. Do you promise me ? ”

“ Ah, yes, I promise you, ” said Lloyd, puzzled at the intensity with which his wife appeared to cling to this idea.

“ Will you swear ? ” repeated Perdita.

“ Yes, I swear. ”

“ Well — I trust you — I trust you, ” said the poor lady, looking into his eyes with eyes in which, if he had suspected her vague apprehensions, he might have read an appeal quite as much as an assurance.

Lloyd bore his bereavement soberly and manfully. A month after his wife's death, in the course of commerce, circumstances arose which offered him an opportunity of going to England. He embraced it as an alleviation to his sadness. He was absent nearly a year, during which his little girl was tenderly nursed and cherished by her grandmother. On his return he had his house again thrown open, and announced his intention of keeping the same state as during his wife's lifetime. It very soon came to be predicted that he would marry again, and there were at least a dozen young women of whom one may say that it was by no fault of theirs that, for six months after his return, the prediction did not come true. During this interval he still left his little daughter in Mrs. Willoughby's hands, the latter assuring him that a change of residence at so tender an age was perilous to her health. Finally, however, he declared that his heart longed for the little creature's presence, and that she must be brought up to town. He sent his coach and his housekeeper to fetch her home. Mrs. Willoughby was in terror lest something should befall her on the road ; and, in accordance with this feeling, Viola offered to ride along with her. She could return the next day. So she went up to town with her little niece, and Mr. Lloyd met her on the threshold of his house, overcome with her kindness and with gratitude. Instead of returning the next day, Viola stayed out the week ; and when at last she reappeared, she had only come for her clothes. Arthur would not hear of her coming home, nor would the baby. She cried and moaned if Viola left her ; and at the sight of her grief Arthur lost his wits, and swore that she was going to die. In fine, nothing would suit them but that Viola should remain until the little thing had grown used to strange faces.

It took two months for this consummation to be brought about ; for it was not until this period had elapsed that Viola took leave of her brother-in-law. Mrs. Willoughby had fretted and fumed

over her daughter's absence; she had declared that it was not becoming, and that it was the talk of the town. She had reconciled herself to it only because, during the young girl's visit, the household enjoyed an unwonted term of peace. Bernard Willoughby had brought his wife home to live, between whom and her sister-in-law there existed a bitter hostility. Viola was perhaps no angel; but in the daily practice of life she was a sufficiently good-natured girl, and if she quarrelled with Mrs. Bernard it was not without provocation. Quarrel, however, she did, to the great annoyance not only of her antagonist, but the two spectators of these constant altercations. Her stay in the household of her brother-in-law, therefore, would have been delightful, if only because it removed her from contact with the object of her antipathy at home. It was doubly — it was ten times — delightful, inasmuch as it kept her near the object of her old passion. Mrs. Lloyd's conjectures had fallen very far short of the truth touching Viola's feeling for her husband. It had been a passion at first and a passion it remained, — a passion of whose radiant heat, tempered to the delicate state of his feelings, Mr. Lloyd very soon felt the influence. Lloyd, as I have said, was no paragon; it was not in his nature to practise an ideal constancy. He had not been many days in the house with his sister-in-law before he began to assure himself that she was, in the language of that day, a devilish fine woman. Whether Viola really practised those insidious arts that her sister had been tempted to impute to her it is needless to inquire. It is enough to say that she found means to appear to the very best advantage. She used to seat herself every morning before the great fireplace in the dining-room, at work upon a piece of tapestry, with her little niece disporting herself on the carpet at her feet, or on the train of her dress, and playing with her woollen balls. Lloyd would have been a very stupid fellow if he had remained insensible to the rich suggestions of this charm-

ing picture. He was prodigiously fond of his little girl, and was never weary of taking her in his arms and tossing her up and down, and making her crow with delight. Very often, however, he would venture upon greater liberties than the little creature was yet prepared to allow, and she would suddenly vociferate her displeasure. Viola would then drop her tapestry, and put out her handsome hands with the serious smile of the young girl whose virgin fancy has revealed to her all a mother's healing arts. Lloyd would give up the child, their eyes would meet, their hands would touch, and Viola would extinguish the little girl's sobs upon the snowy folds of the kerchief that crossed her bosom. Her dignity was perfect, and nothing could be less obtrusive than the manner in which she accepted her brother-in-law's hospitality. It may be almost said, perhaps, that there was something harsh in her reserve. Lloyd had a provoking feeling that she was in the house, and yet that she was unapproachable. Half an hour after supper, at the very outset of the long winter evenings, she would light her candle, and make the young man a most respectful courtesy, and march off to bed. If these were arts, Viola was a great artist. But their effect was so gentle, so gradual, they were calculated to work upon the young widower's fancy with such a finely shaded *crescendo*, that, as the reader has seen, several weeks elapsed before Viola began to feel sure that her return would cover her outlay. When this became morally certain, she packed up her trunk, and returned to her mother's house. For three days she waited; on the fourth Mr. Lloyd made his appearance, a respectful but ardent suitor. Viola heard him out with great humility, and accepted him with infinite modesty. It is hard to imagine that Mrs. Lloyd should have forgiven her husband; but if anything might have disarmed her resentment, it would have been the ceremonious continence of this interview. Viola imposed upon her lover but a short probation. They were married, as was becoming, with

great privacy, — almost with secrecy, — in the hope, perhaps, as was waggishly remarked at the time, that the late Mrs. Lloyd would n't hear of it.

The marriage was to all appearance a happy one, and each party obtained what each had desired, — Lloyd “a devilish fine woman,” and Viola — but Viola's desires, as the reader will have observed, have remained a good deal of a mystery. There were, indeed, two blots upon their felicity; but time would, perhaps, efface them. During the three first years of her marriage Mrs. Lloyd failed to become a mother, and her husband on his side suffered heavy losses of money. This latter circumstance compelled a material retrenchment in his expenditure, and Viola was perforce less of a great lady than her sister had been. She contrived, however, to sustain with unbroken consistency the part of an elegant woman, although it must be confessed that it required the exercise of more ingenuity than belongs to your real aristocratic repose. She had long since ascertained that her sister's immense wardrobe had been sequestered for the benefit of her daughter, and that it lay languishing in thankless gloom in the dusty attic. It was a revolting thought that these glorious fabrics should wait on the bidding of a little girl who sat in a high chair, and ate bread-and-milk with a wooden spoon. Viola had the good taste, however, to say nothing about the matter until several months had expired. Then, at last, she timidly broached it to her husband. Was it not a pity that so much finery should be lost? — for lost it would be, what with colors fading, and moths eating it up, and the change of fashions. But Lloyd gave so abrupt and peremptory a negative to her inquiry, that she saw that for the present her attempt was vain. Six months went by, however, and brought with them new needs and new fancies. Viola's thoughts hovered lovingly about her sister's relics. She went up and looked at the chest in which they lay imprisoned. There was a sullen defiance in its three great pad-

locks and its iron bands, which only quickened her desires. There was something exasperating in its incorruptible immobility. It was like a grim and grizzled old household servant, who locks his jaws over a family secret. And then there was a look of capacity in its vast extent, and a sound as of dense fulness, when Viola knocked its side with the toe of her little slipper, which caused her to flush with baffled longing. “It's absurd,” she cried; “it's improper, it's wicked,” and she forthwith resolved upon another attack upon her husband. On the following day, after dinner, when he had had his wine, she bravely began it. But he cut her short with great sternness.

“Once for all, Viola,” said he, “it's out of the question. I shall be gravely displeased if you return to the matter.”

“Very good,” said Viola. “I'm glad to learn the value at which I'm held. Great Heaven!” she cried, “I'm a happy woman. It's a delightful thing to feel one's self sacrificed to a caprice!” And her eyes filled with tears of anger and disappointment.

Lloyd had a good-natured man's horror of a woman's sobs, and he attempted — I may say he condescended — to explain. “It's not a caprice, dear, it's a promise,” he said, — “an oath.”

“An oath? It's a pretty matter for oaths! and to whom, pray?”

“To Perdita,” said the young man, raising his eyes for an instant, but immediately dropping them.

“Perdita, — ah, Perdita!” And Viola's tears broke forth. Her bosom heaved with stormy sobs, — sobs which were the long-deferred counterpart of the violent fit of weeping in which she had indulged herself on the night when she discovered her sister's betrothal. She had hoped, in her better moments, that she had done with her jealousy; but here it raged again as fierce as ever. “And pray what right,” she cried, “had Perdita to dispose of my future? What right had she to bind you to meanness and cruelty? Ah, I occupy a dignified place, and I make a very fine figure! I'm welcome to what Perdita has left!

And what has she left? I never knew till now how little! Nothing, nothing, nothing!"

This was very poor logic, but it was very good passion. Lloyd put his arm around his wife's waist and tried to kiss her, but she shook him off with magnificent scorn. Poor fellow! he had coveted a "devilish fine woman," and he had got one. Her scorn was intolerable. He walked away with his ears tingling, — irresolute, distracted. Before him was his secretary, and in it the sacred key which with his own hand he had turned in the triple lock. He marched up and opened it, and took the key from a secret drawer, wrapped in a little packet which he had sealed with his own honest bit of blazonry. *Teneo*, said the motto, — "I hold." But he was ashamed to put it back. He flung it upon the table beside his wife.

"Keep it!" she cried. "I want it not. I hate it!"

"I wash my hands of it," cried her husband. "God forgive me!"

Mrs. Lloyd gave an indignant shrug of her shoulders, and swept out of the room, while the young man retreated by another door. Ten minutes later Mrs. Lloyd returned, and found the room occupied by her little step-daughter and the nursery-maid. The key was not on the table. She glanced at the child. The child was perched on a chair with the packet in her hands. She had broken the seal with her own little fingers. Mrs. Lloyd hastily took possession of the key.

At the habitual supper-hour Arthur Lloyd came back from his counting-room. It was the month of June, and supper was served by daylight. The meal was placed on the table, but Mrs. Lloyd failed to make her appearance. The servant whom his master sent to call her came back with the assurance that her room was empty, and that the

women informed him that she had not been seen since dinner. They had in truth observed her to have been in tears, and, supposing her to be shut up in her chamber, had not disturbed her. Her husband called her name in various parts of the house, but without response. At last it occurred to him that he might find her by taking the way to the attic. The thought gave him a strange feeling of discomfort, and he bade his servants remain behind, wishing no witness in his quest. He reached the foot of the staircase leading to the topmost flat, and stood with his hand on the banisters, pronouncing his wife's name. His voice trembled. He called again, louder and more firmly. The only sound which disturbed the absolute silence was a faint echo of his own voice, repeating his question under the great eaves. He nevertheless felt irresistibly moved to ascend the staircase. It opened upon a wide hall, lined with wooden closets, and terminating in a window which looked westward, and admitted the last rays of the sun. Before the window stood the great chest. Before the chest, on her knees, the young man saw with amazement and horror the figure of his wife. In an instant he crossed the interval between them, bereft of utterance. The lid of the chest stood open, exposing, amid their perfumed napkins, its treasure of stuffs and jewels. Viola had fallen backward from a kneeling posture, with one hand supporting her on the floor and the other pressed to her heart. On her limbs was the stiffness of death, and on her face, in the fading light of the sun, the terror of something more than death. Her lips were parted in entreaty, in dismay, in agony; and on her bloodless brow and cheeks there glowed the marks of ten hideous wounds from two vengeful ghostly hands.

wide mouth, with teeth as sharpe as needles, wherewith shee biteth such as tread upon her; her poyson lyeth in her teeth, for shee hath no sting. When any man is bitten by any one of these creatures, the poyson spreads so suddenly through the veines, & so runs to the heart, that in one hour it causeth death, unlesse he hath the Antidote to expell the poyson, which is a root called Snakeweede, which must be champed, the spittle swallowed & the roote applied to the sore; this is present cure against that which would be present death without it; this weede is ranke poyson, if it be taken by any man that is not bitten, unlesse it be physically compounded; whosoever is bitten by these snakes his flesh becomes spotted like a leaper untill he be perfectly cured. It is reported that if the party live that is bitten, the snake will dye, & if the party dye the snake will live. This is the most poysonous and dangerous creature, yet nothing so bad as the report goes of him in England. For whereas hee is said to kill a man with his breath, & that hee can flie, there is no such matter, for he is naturally the most sleepe & unnimble creature that lives, never offering to leape or bite any man if he be not trodden on first; & it is their desire in hot weathèr to lie in pathes, where the sun may shine on them, where they will

sleepe so soundly that I have known foure men stride over one of them & never awake her; five or six men have been bitten by them, which by using snakeweede were all cured, never yet any losing his life by them. Cowes have been bitten, but being cut in divers places & this weede thrust into their flesh were cured. I never heard of any beast that was yet lost by any of them, saving one mare." (p. 38.)

(From *New England's Rarities*. Discovered by JOHN JOSSELYN, Gent. London, 1672.)

"The Rattle Snake who poysons with a vapour that comes through two crooked fanges in their mouths; the hollows of these fanges are black as ink. The Indians when weary with travelling, will take them up with their bare hands, laying hold with one hand behind their head, with the other taking hold of their tail, & with their teeth tear off the skin of their backs & feed upon them alive, which they say refresheth them." Ugh!! (p. 38.)

We are aware of no earlier accounts; so that, in the scope of this article, the readers of the Atlantic have the first and the very last words concerning the serpent in question.

A MOST EXTRAORDINARY CASE.

LATE in the spring of the year 1865, just as the war had come to a close, a young invalid officer lay in bed in one of the uppermost chambers of one of the great New York hotels. His meditations were interrupted by the entrance of a waiter, who handed him a card superscribed *Mrs. Samuel Mason*, and bearing on its reverse the following words in pencil: "Dear Colonel Mason, I have only just heard of your being here, ill and alone. It's too dreadful. Do you remember me? Will you see me? If you do, I think you *will* remember me. I insist on coming up. M. M."

Mason was undressed, unshaven, weak, and feverish. His ugly little hotel chamber was in a state of confusion which had not even the merit of being picturesque. Mrs. Mason's card was at once a puzzle and a heavenly intimation of comfort. But all that it represented was so dim to the young man's enfeebled perception that it took him some moments to collect his thoughts.

"It's a lady, sir," said the waiter, by way of assisting him.

"Is she young or old?" asked Mason.

"Well, sir, she's a little of both."

"I can't ask a lady to come up here," groaned the invalid.

"Upon my word, sir, you look beautiful," said the waiter. "They like a sick man. And I see she's of your own name," continued Michael, in whom constant service had bred great frankness of speech; "the more shame to her for not coming before."

Colonel Mason concluded that, as the visit had been of Mrs. Mason's own seeking, he would receive her without more ado. "If she does n't mind it, I'm sure I need n't," said the poor fellow, who had n't the strength to be over-punctilious. So in a very few moments his visitor was ushered up to his bedside. He saw before him a handsome, middle-aged blond woman, stout of figure, and dressed in the height of the fashion, who displayed no other embarrassment than such as was easily explained by the loss of breath consequent on the ascent of six flights of stairs.

"Do you remember me?" she asked, taking the young man's hand.

He lay back on his pillow, and looked at her. "You used to be my aunt,—my aunt Maria," he said.

"I'm your aunt Maria, still," she answered. "It's very good of you not to have forgotten me."

"It's very good of you not to have forgotten *me*," said Mason, in a tone which betrayed a deeper feeling than the wish to return a civil speech.

"Dear me, you've had the war and a hundred dreadful things. I've been living in Europe, you know. Since my return I've been living in the country, in your uncle's old house on the river, of which the lease had just expired when I came home. I came to town yesterday on business, and accidentally heard of your condition and your whereabouts. I knew you'd gone into the army, and I had been wondering a dozen times what had become of you, and whether you would n't turn up now that the war's at last over. Of course I did n't lose a moment in coming to you. I'm *so* sorry for you." Mrs. Mason looked about her for a seat. The chairs were encumbered with odds

and ends belonging to her nephew's wardrobe and to his equipment, and with the remnants of his last repast. The good lady surveyed the scene with the beautiful mute irony of compassion.

The young man lay watching her comely face in delicious submission to whatever form of utterance this feeling might take. "You're the first woman—to call a woman—I've seen in I don't know how many months," he said, contrasting her appearance with that of his room, and reading her thoughts.

"I should suppose so. I mean to be as good as a dozen." She disembarassed one of the chairs, and brought it to the bed. Then, seating herself, she ungloved one of her hands, and laid it softly on the young man's wrist. "What a great full-grown young fellow you've become!" she pursued. "Now, tell me, are you very ill?"

"You must ask the doctor," said Mason. "I actually don't know. I'm extremely uncomfortable, but I suppose it's partly my circumstances."

"I've no doubt it's more than half your circumstances. I've seen the doctor. Mrs. Van Zandt is an old friend of mine; and when I come to town, I always go to see her. It was from her I learned this morning that you were here in this state. We had begun by rejoicing over the new prospects of peace; and from that, of course, we had got to lamenting the numbers of young men who are to enter upon it with lost limbs and shattered health. It happened that Mrs. Van Zandt mentioned several of her husband's patients as examples, and yourself among the number. You were an excellent young man, miserably sick, without family or friends, and with no asylum but a suffocating little closet in a noisy hotel. You may imagine that I pricked up my ears, and asked your baptismal name. Dr. Van Zandt came in, and told me. Your name is luckily an uncommon one: it's absurd to suppose that there could be two Ferdinand Masons. In short, I felt that you were my husband's brother's child, and that at last

I too might have my little turn at hero-nursing. The little that the Doctor knew of your history agreed with the little that I knew, though I confess I was sorry to hear that you had never spoken of our relationship. But why should you? At all events you've got to acknowledge it now. I regret your not having said something about it before, only because the Doctor might have brought us together a month ago, and you would now have been well."

"It will take me more than a month to get well," said Mason, feeling that, if Mrs. Mason was meaning to exert herself on his behalf, she should know the real state of the case. "I never spoke of you, because I had quite lost sight of you. I fancied you were still in Europe; and indeed," he added, after a moment's hesitation, "I heard that you had married again."

"Of course you did," said Mrs. Mason, placidly. "I used to hear it once a month myself. But I had a much better right to fancy you married. Thank Heaven, however, there's nothing of that sort between us. We can each do as we please. I promise to cure you in a month, in spite of yourself."

"What's your remedy?" asked the young man, with a smile very courteous, considering how sceptical it was.

"My first remedy is to take you out of this horrible hole. I talked it all over with Dr. Van Zandt. He says you must get into the country. Why, my dear boy, this is enough to kill you outright, — one Broadway outside of your window and another outside of your door! Listen to me. My house is directly on the river, and only two hours' journey by rail. You know I've no children. My only companion is my niece, Caroline Hofmann. You shall come and stay with us until you are as strong as you need be, — if it takes a dozen years. You shall have sweet, cool air, and proper food, and decent attendance, and the devotion of a sensible woman. I shall not listen to a word of objection. You shall do as you please, get up when you please,

dine when you please, go to bed when you please, and say what you please. I shall ask nothing of you but to let yourself be very dearly cared for. Do you remember how, when you were a boy at school, after your father's death, you were taken with measles, and your uncle had you brought to our own house? I helped to nurse you myself, and I remember what nice manners you had in the very midst of your measles. Your uncle was very fond of you; and if he had had any considerable property of his own, I know he would have remembered you in his will. But of course he could n't leave away his wife's money. What I wish to do for you is a very small part of what he would have done, if he had only lived, and heard of your gallantry and your sufferings. So it's settled. I shall go home this afternoon. Tomorrow morning I shall despatch my man-servant to you with instructions. He's an Englishman. He thoroughly knows his business, and he will put up your things, and save you every particle of trouble. You've only to let yourself be dressed, and driven to the train. I shall, of course, meet you at your journey's end. Now don't tell me you're not strong enough."

"I feel stronger at this moment than I've felt in a dozen weeks," said Mason. "It's useless for me to attempt to thank you."

"Quite useless. I should n't listen to you. And I suppose," added Mrs. Mason, looking over the bare walls and scanty furniture of the room, "you pay a fabulous price for this bower of bliss. Do you need money?"

The young man shook his head.

"Very well then," resumed Mrs. Mason, conclusively, "from this moment you're in my hands."

The young man lay speechless from the very fulness of his heart; but he strove by the pressure of his fingers to give her some assurance of his gratitude. His companion rose, and lingered beside him, drawing on her glove, and smiling quietly with the look of a long-baffled philanthropist who has at last

discovered a subject of infinite capacity. Poor Ferdinand's weary visage reflected her smile. Finally, after the lapse of years, he too was being cared for. He let his head sink into the pillow, and silently inhaled the perfume of her sober elegance and her cordial good-nature. He felt like taking her dress in his hand, and asking her not to leave him, — now that solitude would be bitter. His eyes, I suppose, betrayed this touching apprehension, — doubly touching in a war-wasted young officer. As she prepared to bid him farewell, Mrs. Mason stooped, and kissed his forehead. He listened to the rustle of her dress across the carpet, to the gentle closing of the door, and to her retreating footsteps. And then, giving way to his weakness, he put his hands to his face, and cried like a homesick school-boy. He had been reminded of the exquisite side of life.

Matters went forward as Mrs. Mason had arranged them. At six o'clock on the following evening Ferdinand found himself deposited at one of the way stations of the Hudson River Railroad, exhausted by his journey, and yet excited at the prospect of its drawing to a close. Mrs. Mason was in waiting in a low basket-phaeton, with a magazine of cushions and wrappings. Ferdinand transferred himself to her side, and they drove rapidly homeward. Mrs. Mason's house was a cottage of liberal make, with a circular lawn, a sinuous avenue, and a well-grown plantation of shrubbery. As the phaeton drew up before the porch, a young lady appeared in the doorway. Mason will be forgiven if he considered himself presented *ex officio*, as I may say, to this young lady. Before he really knew it, and in the absence of the servant, who, under Mrs. Mason's directions, was busy in the background with his trunk, he had availed himself of her proffered arm, and had allowed her to assist him through the porch, across the hall, and into the parlor, where she graciously consigned him to a sofa which, for his especial use, she had caused to be wheeled up before a fire kindled for his

especial comfort. He was unable, however, to take advantage of her good offices. Prudence dictated that without further delay he should betake himself to his room.

On the morning after his arrival he got up early, and made an attempt to be present at breakfast; but his strength failed him, and he was obliged to dress at his leisure, and content himself with a simple transition from his bed to his arm-chair. The chamber assigned him was designedly on the ground-floor, so that he was spared the trouble of measuring his strength with the staircase, — a charming room, brightly carpeted and upholstered, and marked by a certain fastidious freshness which betrayed the uncontested dominion of women. It had a broad high window, draped in chintz and crisp muslin and opening upon the greensward of the lawn. At this window, wrapped in his dressing-gown, and lost in the embrace of the most unresisting of arm-chairs, he slowly discussed his simple repast. Before long his hostess made her appearance on the lawn outside the window. As this quarter of the house was covered with warm sunshine, Mason ventured to open the window and talk to her, while she stood out on the grass beneath her parasol.

"It's time to think of your physician," she said. "You shall choose for yourself. The great physician here is Dr. Gregory, a gentleman of the old school. We have had him but once, for my niece and I have the health of a couple of dairy-maids. On that one occasion he — well, he made a fool of himself. His practice is among the 'old families,' and he only knows how to treat certain old-fashioned, obsolete complaints. Anything brought about by the war would be quite out of his range. And then he vacillates, and talks about his own *maladies à lui*. And, to tell the truth, we had a little repartee which makes our relations somewhat ambiguous."

"I see he would never do," said Mason, laughing. "But he's not your only physician?"

"No: there is a young man, a new-comer, a Dr. Knight, whom I don't know, but of whom I've heard very good things. I confess that I have a prejudice in favor of the young men. Dr. Knight has a position to establish, and I suppose he's likely to be especially attentive and careful. I believe, moreover, that he's been an army surgeon."

"I knew a man of his name," said Mason. "I wonder if this is he. His name was Horace Knight, — a light-haired, near-sighted man."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Mason; "perhaps Caroline knows." She retreated a few steps, and called to an upper window: "Caroline, what's Dr. Knight's first name?"

Mason listened to Miss Hofmann's answer, — "I have n't the least idea."

"Is it Horace?"

"I don't know."

"Is he light or dark?"

"I've never seen him."

"Is he near-sighted?"

"How in the world should I know?"

"I fancy he's as good as any one," said Ferdinand. "With you, my dear aunt, what does the doctor matter?"

Mrs. Mason accordingly sent for Dr. Knight, who, on arrival, turned out to be her nephew's old acquaintance. Although the young men had been united by no greater intimacy than the superficial comradeship resulting from a winter in neighboring quarters, they were very well pleased to come together again. Horace Knight was a young man of good birth, good looks, good faculties, and good intentions, who, after a three years' practice of surgery in the army, had undertaken to push his fortune in Mrs. Mason's neighborhood. His mother, a widow with a small income, had recently removed to the country for economy, and her son had been unwilling to leave her to live alone. The adjacent country, moreover, offered a promising field for a man of energy, — a field well stocked with large families of easy income and of those conservative habits which lead people to make much of the cares of a

physician. The local practitioner had survived the glory of his prime, and was not, perhaps, entirely guiltless of Mrs. Mason's charge, that he had not kept up with the progress of the "new diseases." The world, in fact, was getting too new for him, as well as for his old patients. He had had money invested in the South, — precious sources of revenue, which the war had swallowed up at a gulp; he had grown frightened and nervous and querulous; he had lost his presence of mind and his spectacles in several important conjunctures; he had been repeatedly and distinctly fallible; a vague dissatisfaction pervaded the breasts of his patrons; he was without competitors: in short, fortune was propitious to Dr. Knight. Mason remembered the young physician only as a good-humored, intelligent companion; but he soon had reason to believe that his medical skill would leave nothing to be desired. He arrived rapidly at a clear understanding of Ferdinand's case; he asked intelligent questions, and gave simple and definite instructions. The disorder was deeply seated and virulent, but there was no apparent reason why unflinching care and prudence should not subdue it.

"Your strength is very much reduced," he said, as he took his hat and gloves to go; "but I should say you had an excellent constitution. It seems to me, however, — if you will pardon me for saying so, — to be partly your own fault that you have fallen so low. You have opposed no resistance; you have n't cared to get well."

"I confess that I have n't, — particularly. But I don't see how you should know it."

"Why, it's obvious."

"Well, it was natural enough. Until Mrs. Mason discovered me, I had n't a friend in the world. I had become demoralized by solitude. I had almost forgotten the difference between sickness and health. I had nothing before my eyes to remind me in tangible form of that great mass of common human interests for the sake of which — under

whatever name he may disguise the impulse—a man continues in health and recovers from disease. I had forgotten that I ever cared for books or ideas, or anything but the preservation of my miserable carcass. My carcass had become quite too miserable to be an object worth living for. I was losing time and money at an appalling rate; I was getting worse rather than better; and I therefore gave up resistance. It seemed better to die easy than to die hard. I put it all in the past tense, because within these three days I've become quite another man."

"I wish to Heaven I could have heard of you," said Knight. "I would have made you come home with me, if I could have done nothing else. It was certainly not a rose-colored prospect; but what do you say now?" he continued, looking around the room. "I should say that at the present moment rose-color was the prevailing hue."

Mason assented with an eloquent smile.

"I congratulate you from my heart. Mrs. Mason—if you don't mind my speaking of her—is so thoroughly (and, I should suppose, incorrigibly) good-natured, that it's quite a surprise to find her extremely sensible."

"Yes; and so resolute and sensible in her better moments," said Ferdinand, "that it's quite a surprise to find her good-natured. She's a fine woman."

"But I should say that your especial blessing was your servant. He looks as if he had come out of an English novel."

"My especial blessing! You haven't seen Miss Hofmann, then?"

"Yes: I met her in the hall. She looks as if she had come out of an American novel. I don't know that that's great praise; but, at all events, I make her come out of it."

"You're bound in honor, then," said Mason, laughing, "to put her into another."

Mason's conviction of his newly made happiness needed no enforcement at the Doctor's hands. He felt that it would be his own fault if these were

not among the most delightful days of his life. He resolved to give himself up without stint to his impressions,—utterly to vegetate. His illness alone would have been a sufficient excuse for a long term of intellectual laxity; but Mason had other good reasons besides. For the past three years he had been stretched without intermission on the rack of duty. Although constantly exposed to hard service, it had been his fortune never to receive a serious wound; and, until his health broke down, he had taken fewer holidays than any officer I ever heard of. With an abundance of a certain kind of equanimity and self-control,—a faculty of ready self-adaptation to the accomplished fact, in any direction,—he was yet in his innermost soul a singularly nervous, over-scrupulous person. On the few occasions when he had been absent from the scene of his military duties, although duly authorized and warranted in the act, he had suffered so acutely from the apprehension that something was happening, or was about to happen, which not to have witnessed or to have had a hand in would be matter of eternal mortification, that he can be barely said to have enjoyed his recreation. The sense of lost time was, moreover, his perpetual bugbear,—the feeling that precious hours were now fleeting uncounted, which in more congenial labors would suffice almost for the building of a monument more lasting than brass. This feeling he strove to propitiate as much as possible by assiduous reading and study in the intervals of his actual occupations. I cite the fact merely as an evidence of the uninterrupted austerity of his life for a long time before he fell sick. I might triple this period, indeed, by a glance at his college years, and at certain busy months which intervened between this close of his youth and the opening of the war. Mason had always worked. He was fond of work to begin with; and, in addition, the complete absence of family ties had allowed him to follow his tastes without obstruction or diversion. This circumstance had been

at once a great gain to him and a serious loss. He reached his twenty-seventh year a very accomplished scholar, as scholars go, but a great dunce in certain social matters. He was quite ignorant of all those lighter and more evanescent forms of conviviality attached to being somebody's son, brother, or cousin. At last, however, as he reminded himself, he was to discover what it was to be the nephew of somebody's husband. Mrs. Mason was to teach him the meaning of the adjective *domestic*. It would have been hard to learn it in a pleasanter way. Mason felt that he was to learn something from his very idleness, and that he would leave the house a wiser as well as a better man. It became probable, thanks to that quickening of the faculties which accompanies the dawning of a sincere and rational attachment, that in this last respect he would not be disappointed. Very few days sufficed to reveal to him the many excellent qualities of his hostess,—her warm capacious heart, her fairness of mind, her good temper, her good taste, her vast fund of experience and of reminiscence, and, indeed, more than all, a certain passionate devotedness, to which fortune, in leaving her a childless widow, had done but scant justice. The two accordingly established a friendship,—a friendship that promised as well for the happiness of each as any that ever undertook to meddle with happiness. If I were telling my story from Mrs. Mason's point of view, I take it that I might make a very good thing of the statement that this lady had deliberately and solemnly conferred her affection upon my hero; but I am compelled to let it stand in this simple shape. Excellent, charming person that she was, she had every right to the rich satisfaction which belonged to a liberal—yet not too liberal—estimate of her guest. She had divined him,—so much the better for her. That it was very much the better for him is obviously one of the elementary facts of my narrative; a fact of which Mason became so rapidly and profoundly sensible, that he was soon able to dismiss

it from his thoughts to his life,—its proper sphere.

In the space of ten days, then, most of the nebulous impressions evoked by change of scene had gathered into substantial form. Others, however, were still in the nebulous state,—diffusing a gentle light upon Ferdinand's path. Chief among these was the mild radiance of which Miss Hofmann was the centre. For three days after his arrival Mason had been confined to his room by the aggravation of his condition consequent upon his journey. It was not till the fourth day, therefore, that he was able to renew the acquaintance so auspiciously commenced. When at last, at dinner-time, he reappeared in the drawing-room, Miss Hofmann greeted him almost as an old friend. Mason had already discovered that she was young and gracious; he now rapidly advanced to the conclusion that she was uncommonly pretty. Before dinner was over, he had made up his mind that she was neither more nor less than beautiful. Mrs. Mason had found time to give him a full account of her life. She had lost her mother in infancy, and had been adopted by her aunt in the early years of this lady's widowhood. Her father was a man of evil habits,—a drunkard, a gambler, and a rake, outlawed from decent society. His only dealings with his daughter were to write her every month or two a begging letter, she being in possession of her mother's property. Mrs. Mason had taken her niece to Europe, and given her every advantage. She had had an expensive education; she had travelled; she had gone into the world; she had been presented, like a good republican, to no less than three European sovereigns; she had been admired; she had had half a dozen offers of marriage to her aunt's knowledge, and others, perhaps, of which she was ignorant, and had refused them all. She was now twenty-six years of age, beautiful, accomplished, and *au mieux* with her bankers. She was an excellent girl, with a will of her own. "I'm very fond of her," Mrs.

Mason declared, with her habitual frankness ; "and I suppose she's equally fond of me ; but we long ago gave up all idea of playing at mother and daughter. We have never had a disagreement since she was fifteen years old ; but we have never had an agreement either. Caroline is no sentimentalist. She's honest, good-tempered, and perfectly discerning. She foresaw that we were still to spend a number of years together, and she wisely declined at the outset to affect a range of feelings that would n't stand the wear and tear of time. She knew that she would make a poor daughter, and she contented herself with being a good niece. A capital niece she is. In fact we're almost sisters. There are moments when I feel as if she were ten years older than I, and as if it were absurd in me to attempt to interfere with her life. I never do. She has it quite in her own hands. My attitude is little more than a state of affectionate curiosity as to what she will do with it. Of course she'll marry, sooner or later ; but I'm curious to see the man of her choice. In Europe, you know, girls have no acquaintances but such as they share with their parents and guardians ; and in that way I know most of the gentlemen who have tried to make themselves acceptable to my niece. There were some excellent young men in the number ; but there was not one — or, rather, there was but one — for whom Caroline cared a straw. That one she loved, I believe ; but they had a quarrel, and she lost him. She's very discreet and conciliating. I'm sure no girl ever before got rid of half a dozen suitors with so little offence. Ah, she's a dear, good girl !" Mrs. Mason pursued. "She's saved me a world of trouble in my day. And when I think what she might have been, with her beauty, and what not ! She has kept all her suitors as friends. There are two of them who write to her still. She does n't answer their letters ; but once in a while she meets them, and thanks them for writing, and that contents them. The others are married,

and Caroline remains single. I take for granted it won't last forever. Still, although she's *not* a sentimentalist, she'll not marry a man she does n't care for, merely because she's growing old. Indeed, it's only the sentimental girls, to my belief, that do that. They covet a man for his money or his looks, and then give the feeling some fine name. But there's one thing, Mr. Ferdinand," added Mrs. Mason, at the close of these remarks, "you will be so good as not to fall in love with my niece. I can assure you that she'll not fall in love with you, and a hopeless passion will not hasten your recovery. Caroline is a charming girl. You can live with her very well without that. She's good for common daylight, and you'll have no need of wax-candles and ecstasies."

"Be reassured," said Ferdinand, laughing. "I'm quite too attentive to myself at present to think of any one else. Miss Hofmann might be dying for a glance of my eye, and I should n't hesitate to sacrifice her. It takes more than half a man to fall in love."

At the end of ten days summer had fairly set in ; and Mason found it possible, and indeed profitable, to spend a large portion of his time in the open air. He was unable either to ride or to walk ; and the only form of exercise which he found practicable was an occasional drive in Mrs. Mason's phaeton. On these occasions Mrs. Mason was his habitual companion. The neighborhood offered an interminable succession of beautiful drives ; and poor Ferdinand took a truly exquisite pleasure in reclining idly upon a pile of cushions, warmly clad, empty-handed, silent, with only his eyes in motion, and rolling rapidly between fragrant hedges and springing crops, and beside the outskirts of woods, and along the heights which overlooked the river. Detested war was over, and all nature had ratified the peace. Mason used to gaze up into the cloudless sky until his eyes began to water, and you would have actually supposed he was shedding sentimental tears. Besides these com-

fortable drives with his hostess, Mason had adopted another method of inhaling the sunshine. He used frequently to spend several hours at a time on a veranda beside the house, sheltered from the observation of visitors. Here, with an arm-chair and a footstool, a cigar and half a dozen volumes of novels, to say nothing of the society of either of the ladies, and sometimes of both, he suffered the mornings to pass unmeasured and uncounted. The chief incident of these mornings was the Doctor's visit, in which, of course, there was a strong element of prose,—and very good prose, as I may add, for the Doctor was turning out an excellent fellow. But, for the rest, time unrolled itself like a gentle strain of music. Mason knew so little, from direct observation, of the *vie intime* of elegant, intelligent women, that their habits, their manners, their household motions, their principles, possessed in his view all the charm of a spectacle,—a spectacle which he contemplated with the indolence of an invalid, the sympathy of a man of taste, and a little of the awkwardness which women gladly allow, and indeed provoke, in a soldier, for the pleasure of forgiving it. It was a very simple matter to Miss Hofmann that she should be dressed in fresh crisp muslin, that her hands should be white and her attitudes felicitous; she had long since made her peace with these things. But to Mason, who was familiar only with books and men, they were objects of constant, half-dreamy contemplation. He would sit for half an hour at once, with a book on his knees and the pages unturned, scrutinizing with ingenious indirectness the simple mass of colors and contours which made up the physical personality of Miss Hofmann. There was no question as to her beauty, or as to its being a warm, sympathetic beauty, and not the cold perfection of poetry. She was the least bit taller than most women, and neither stout nor the reverse. Her hair was of a dark and lustrous brown, turning almost to black, and lending itself readily

to those multitudinous ringlets which were then in fashion. Her forehead was broad, open, and serene; and her eyes of that deep and clear sea-green that you may observe of a summer's afternoon, when the declining sun shines through the rising of a wave. Her complexion was the color of perfect health. These, with her full, mild lips, her generous and flexible figure, her magnificent hands, were charms enough to occupy Mason's attention, and it was but seldom that he allowed it to be diverted. Mrs. Mason was frequently called away by her household cares, but Miss Hofmann's time was apparently quite her own. Nevertheless, it came into Ferdinand's head one day, that she gave him her company only from a sense of duty, and when, according to his wont, he had allowed this impression to ripen in his mind, he ventured to assure her that, much as he valued her society, he should be sorry to believe that her gracious bestowal of it interfered with more profitable occupations. "I'm no companion," he said. "I don't pretend to be one. I sit here deaf and dumb, and blind and halt, patiently waiting to be healed,—waiting till this vagabond Nature of ours strolls my way, and brushes me with the hem of her garment."

"I find you very good company," Miss Hofmann replied on this occasion. "What do you take me for? The hero of a hundred fights, a young man who has been reduced to a shadow in the service of his country,—I should be very fastidious if I asked for anything better."

"O, if it's on theory!" said Mason. And, in spite of Miss Hofmann's protest, he continued to assume that it *was* on theory that he was not intolerable. But she remained true to her post, and with a sort of placid inveteracy which seemed to the young man to betray either a great deal of indifference or a great deal of self-command. "She thinks I'm stupid," he said to himself. "Of course she thinks I'm stupid. How should she think otherwise? She and her aunt have talked

me over. Mrs. Mason has enumerated my virtues, and Miss Hofmann has added them up: total, a well-meaning bore. She has armed herself with patience. I must say it becomes her very well." Nothing was more natural, however, than that Mason should exaggerate the effect of his social incapacity. His remarks were desultory, but not infrequent; often trivial, but always good-humored and informal. The intervals of silence, indeed, which enlivened his conversation with Miss Hofmann, might easily have been taken for the confident pauses in the talk of old friends.

Once in a while Miss Hofmann would sit down at the piano and play to him. The veranda communicated with the little sitting-room by means of a long window, one side of which stood open. Mason would move his chair to this aperture, so that he might see the music as well as hear it. Seated at the instrument, at the farther end of the half-darkened room, with her figure in half-profile, and her features, her movements, the color of her dress, but half defined in the cool obscurity, Miss Hofmann would discourse infinite melody. Mason's eyes rested awhile on the vague white folds of her dress, on the heavy convolutions of her hair, and the gentle movement of her head in sympathy with the music. Then a single glance in the other direction revealed another picture,—the dazzling midday sky, the close-cropped lawn, lying almost black in its light, and the patient, round-backed gardener, in white shirt-sleeves, clipping the hedge or rolling the gravel. One morning, what with the music, the light, the heat, and the fragrance of the flowers,—from the perfect equilibrium of his senses, as it were,—Mason manfully went to sleep. On waking he found that he had slept an hour, and that the sun had invaded the veranda. The music had ceased; but on looking into the parlor he saw Miss Hofmann still at the piano. A gentleman was leaning on the instrument with his back toward the window, intercepting her face. Mason sat for some moments, hardly sensible, at first,

of his transition to consciousness, languidly guessing at her companion's identity. In a short time his observation was quickened by the fact that the picture before him was animated by no sound of voices. The silence was unnatural, or, at the least, disagreeable. Mason moved his chair, and the gentleman looked round. The gentleman was Horace Knight. The Doctor called out, "Good morning!" from his place, and finished his conversation with Miss Hofmann before coming out to his patient. When he moved away from the piano, Mason saw the reason of his friends' silence. Miss Hofmann had been trying to decipher a difficult piece of music, the Doctor had been trying to assist her, and they had both been brought to a stop.

"What a clever fellow he is!" thought Mason. "There he stands, rattling off musical terms as if he had never thought of anything else. And yet, when he talks medicine, it's impossible to talk more to the point." Mason continued to be very well satisfied with Knight's intelligence of his case, and with his treatment of it. He had been in the country now for three weeks, and he would hesitate indeed to affirm that he felt materially better; but he felt more comfortable. There were moments when he feared to push the inquiry as to his real improvement, because he had a sickening apprehension that he would discover that in one or two important particulars he was worse. In the course of time he imparted these fears to his physician. "But I may be mistaken," he added, "and for this reason. During the last fortnight I have become much more sensible of my condition than while I was in town. I then accepted each additional symptom as a matter of course. The more the better, I thought. But now I expect them to give an account of themselves. Now I have a positive wish to recover."

Dr. Knight looked at his patient for a moment curiously. "You are right," he said; "a little impatience is a very good thing."

"O, I 'm not impatient. I 'm patient to a most ridiculous extent. I allow myself a good six months, at the very least."

"That is certainly not unreasonable," said Knight. "And will you allow me a question? Do you intend to spend those six months in this place?"

"I 'm unable to answer you. I suppose I shall finish the summer here, unless the summer finishes me. Mrs. Mason will hear of nothing else. In September I hope to be well enough to go back to town, even if I 'm not well enough to think of work. What do you advise?"

"I advise you to put away all thoughts of work. That is imperative. Have n't you been at work all your life long? Can't you spare a pitiful little twelve-month to health and idleness and pleasure?"

"Ah, pleasure, pleasure!" said Mason, ironically.

"Yes, pleasure," said the Doctor. "What has she done to you that you should speak of her in that manner?"

"O, she bothers me," said Mason.

"You are very fastidious. It 's better to be bothered by pleasure than by pain."

"I don't deny it. But there is a way of being indifferent to pain. I don't mean to say that I have found it out, but in the course of my illness I have caught a glimpse of it. But it 's beyond my strength to be indifferent to pleasure. In two words, I 'm afraid of dying of kindness."

"O, nonsense!"

"Yes, it 's nonsense; and yet it 's not. There would be nothing miraculous in my not getting well."

"It will be your fault if you don't. It will prove that you 're fonder of sickness than health, and that you 're not fit company for sensible mortals. Shall I tell you?" continued the Doctor, after a moment's hesitation. "When I knew you in the army, I always found you a step beyond my comprehension. You took things too hard. You had scruples and doubts about everything. And on top of it all you were devoured

with the mania of appearing to take things easily and to be perfectly indifferent. You played your part very well, but you must do me the justice to confess that it *was* a part."

"I hardly know whether that 's a compliment or an impertinence. I hope, at least, that you don't mean to accuse me of playing a part at the present moment."

"On the contrary. I 'm your physician; you 're frank."

"It 's not because you 're my physician that I 'm frank," said Mason. "I should n't think of burdening you in that capacity with my miserable caprices and fancies"; and Ferdinand paused a moment. "You 're a man!" he pursued, laying his hand on his companion's arm. "There 's nothing here but women, Heaven reward them! I 'm saturated with whispers and perfumes and smiles, and the rustling of dresses. It takes a man to understand a man."

"It takes more than a man to understand you, my dear Mason," said Knight, with a kindly smile. "But I listen."

Mason remained silent, leaning back in his chair, with his eyes wandering slowly over the wide patch of sky disclosed by the window, and his hands languidly folded on his knees. The Doctor examined him with a look half amused, half perplexed. But at last his face grew quite sober, and he contracted his brow. He placed his hand on Mason's arm and shook it gently, while Ferdinand met his gaze. The Doctor frowned, and, as he did so, his companion's mouth expanded into a placid smile. "If you don't get well," said Knight,—"if you don't get well—" and he paused.

"What will be the consequences?" asked Ferdinand, still smiling.

"I shall hate you," said Knight, half smiling too.

Mason broke into a laugh. "What shall I care for that?"

"I shall tell people that you were a poor, spiritless fellow,—that you are no loss."

"I give you leave," said Ferdinand.

The Doctor got up. "I don't like obstinate patients," he said.

Ferdinand burst into a long loud laugh, which ended in a fit of coughing.

"I 'm getting too amusing," said Knight; "I must go."

"Nay, laugh and grow fat," cried Ferdinand. "I promise to get well." But that evening, at least, he was no better, as it turned out, for his momentary exhilaration. Before turning in for the night, he went into the drawing-room to spend half an hour with the ladies. The room was empty, but the lamp was lighted, and he sat down by the table and read a chapter in a novel. He felt excited, light-headed, light-hearted, half-intoxicated, as if he had been drinking strong coffee. He put down his book, and went over to the mantelpiece, above which hung a mirror, and looked at the reflection of his face. For almost the first time in his life he examined his features, and wondered if he were good-looking. He was able to conclude only that he looked very thin and pale, and utterly unfit for the business of life. At last he heard an opening of doors overhead, and a rustling of voluminous skirts on the stairs. Mrs. Mason came in, fresh from the hands of her maid, and dressed for a party.

"And is Miss Hofmann going?" asked Mason. He felt that his heart was beating, and that he hoped Mrs. Mason would say no. His momentary sense of strength, the mellow lamplight, the open piano, and the absence, of the excellent woman before him, struck him as so many reasons for her remaining at home. But the sound of the young lady's descent upon the stairs was an affirmative to his question. She forthwith appeared upon the threshold, dressed in crape of a kind of violent blue, with desultory clusters of white roses. For some ten minutes Mason had the pleasure of being witness of that series of pretty movements and preparations with which women in full dress beguile the interval before their carriage is announced; their

glances at the mirror, their slow assumption of their gloves, their mutual revisions and felicitations.

"Is n't she lovely?" said Miss Hofmann to the young man, nodding at her aunt, who looked every inch the handsome woman that she was.

"Lovely, lovely, lovely!" said Ferdinand, so emphatically, that Miss Hofmann transferred her glance to him; while Mrs. Mason good-humoredly turned her back, and Caroline saw that Mason was engaged in a survey of her own person.

Miss Hofmann smiled discreetly. "I wish very much you might come," she said.

"I shall go to bed," answered Ferdinand, simply.

"Well, that's much better. We shall go to bed at two o'clock. Meanwhile I shall caper about the rooms to the sound of a piano and fiddle, and Aunt Maria will sit against the wall with her toes tucked under a chair. Such is life!"

"You 'll dance then," said Mason.

"I shall dance. Dr. Knight has invited me."

"Does he dance well, Caroline?" asked Mrs. Mason.

"That remains to be seen. I have a strong impression that he does not."

"Why?" asked Ferdinand.

"He does so many other things well."

"That's no reason," said Mrs. Mason. "Do you dance, Ferdinand?"

Ferdinand shook his head.

"I like a man to dance," said Caroline, "and yet I like him not to dance."

"That's a very womanish speech, my dear," said Mrs. Mason.

"I suppose it is. It's inspired by my white gloves and my low dress, and my roses. When once a woman gets on such things, Colonel Mason, expect nothing but nonsense.—Aunt Maria," the young lady continued, "will you button my glove?"

"Let me do it," said Ferdinand. "Your aunt has her gloves on."

"Thank you." And Miss Hofmann extended a long white arm, and drew

back with her other hand the bracelet from her wrist. Her glove had three buttons, and Mason performed the operation with great deliberation and neatness.

"And now," said he, gravely, "I hear the carriage. You want me to put on your shawl."

"If you please,"—Miss Hofmann passed her full white drapery into his hands, and then turned about her fair shoulders. Mason solemnly covered them, while the waiting-maid, who had come in, performed the same service for the elder lady.

"Good by," said the latter, giving him her hand. "You're not to come out into the air." And Mrs. Mason, attended by her maid, transferred herself to the carriage. Miss Hofmann gathered up her loveliness, and prepared to follow. Ferdinand stood leaning against the parlor door, watching her; and as she rustled past him she nodded farewell with a silent smile. A characteristic smile, Mason thought it,—a smile in which there was no expectation of triumph and no affectation of reluctance, but just the faintest suggestion of perfectly good-humored resignation. Mason went to the window and saw the carriage roll away with its lighted lamps, and then stood looking out into the darkness. The sky was cloudy. As he turned away the maid-servant came in, and took from the table a pair of rejected gloves. "I hope you're feeling better, sir," she said, politely.

"Thank you, I think I am."

"It's a pity you could n't have gone with the ladies."

"I'm not well enough yet to think of such things," said Mason, trying to smile. But as he walked across the floor he felt himself attacked by a sudden sensation, which cannot be better described than as a general collapse. He felt dizzy, faint, and sick. His head swam and his knees trembled. "I'm ill," he said, sitting down on the sofa; "you must call William."

William speedily arrived, and conducted the young man to his room.

"What on earth had you been doing, sir?" asked this most irreproachable of serving-men, as he helped him to undress.

Ferdinand was silent a moment. "I had been putting on Miss Hofmann's shawl," he said.

"Is that all, sir?"

"And I had been buttoning her glove."

"Well, sir, you must be very prudent."

"So it appears," said Ferdinand.

He slept soundly, however, and the next morning was the better for it. "I'm certainly better," he said to himself, as he slowly proceeded to his toilet. "A month ago such an attack as that of last evening would have effectually banished sleep. Courage, then. The Devil is n't dead, but he's dying."

In the afternoon he received a visit from Horace Knight. "So you danced last evening at Mrs. Bradshaw's," he said to his friend.

"Yes, I danced. It's a great piece of frivolity for a man in my position; but I thought there would be no harm in doing it just once, to show them I know how. My abstinence in future will tell the better. Your ladies were there. I danced with Miss Hofmann. She was dressed in blue, and she was the most beautiful woman in the room. Every one was talking about it."

"I saw her," said Mason, "before she went off."

"You should have seen her there," said Knight. "The music, the excitement, the spectators, and all that, bring out a woman's beauty."

"So I suppose," said Ferdinand.

"What strikes me," pursued the Doctor, "is her—what shall I call it?—her vitality, her quiet buoyancy. Of course, you did n't see her when she came home? If you had, you would have noticed, unless I'm very much mistaken, that she was as fresh and elastic at two o'clock as she had been at ten. While all the other women looked tired and jaded and used up, she alone showed no signs of exhaustion. She was nei-

ther pale nor flushed, but still light-footed, rosy, and erect. She's solid. You see I can't help looking at such things as a physician. She has a magnificent organization. Among all those other poor girls she seemed to have something of the inviolable strength of a goddess"; and Knight smiled frankly as he entered the region of eloquence. "She wears her artificial roses and dew-drops as if she had gathered them on the mountain-tops, instead of buying them in Broadway. She moves with long steps, her dress rustles, and to a man of fancy it's the sound of Diana on the forest-leaves."

Ferdinand nodded assent. "So you're a man of fancy," he said.

"Of course I am," said the Doctor.

Ferdinand was not inclined to question his friend's estimate of Miss Hofmann, nor to weigh his words. They only served to confirm an impression which was already strong in his own mind. Day by day he had felt the growth of this impression. "He must be a strong man who would approach her," he said to himself. "He must be as vigorous and elastic as she herself, or in the progress of courtship she will leave him far behind. He must be able to forget his lungs and his liver and his digestion. To have broken down in his country's defence, even, will avail him nothing. What is that to her? She needs a man who has defended his country without breaking down,—a being complete, intact, well seasoned, invulnerable. Then,—then," thought Ferdinand, "perhaps she will consider him. Perhaps it will be to refuse him. Perhaps, like Diana, to whom Knight compares her, she is meant to live alone. It's certain, at least, that she is able to wait. She will be young at forty-five. Women who are young at forty-five are perhaps not the most interesting women. They are likely to have felt for nobody and for nothing. But it's often less their own fault than that of the men and women about them. This one at least *can* feel; the thing is to move her. Her soul is an instru-

ment of a hundred strings, only it takes a strong hand to draw sound. Once really touched, they will reverberate for ever and ever."

In fine, Mason was in love. It will be seen that his passion was not arrogant nor uncompromising; but, on the contrary, patient, discreet, and modest,—almost timid. For ten long days, the most memorable days of his life,—days which, if he had kept a journal, would have been left blank,—he held his tongue. He would have suffered anything rather than reveal his emotions, or allow them to come accidentally to Miss Hofmann's knowledge. He would cherish them in silence until he should feel in all his sinews that he was himself again, and then he would open his heart. Meanwhile he would be patient; he would be the most irreproachable, the most austere, the most insignificant of convalescents. He was as yet unfit to touch her, to look at her, to speak to her. A man was not to go a wooing in his dressing-gown and slippers.

There came a day, however, when, in spite of his high resolves, Ferdinand came near losing his balance. Mrs. Mason had arranged with him to drive in the phaeton after dinner. But it befell that, an hour before the appointed time, she was sent for by a neighbor who had been taken ill.

"But it's out of the question that you should lose your drive," said Miss Hofmann, who brought him her aunt's apologies. "If you are still disposed to go, I shall be happy to take the reins. I shall not be as good company as Aunt Maria, but perhaps I shall be as good company as Thomas." It was settled, accordingly, that Miss Hofmann should act as her aunt's substitute, and at five o'clock the phaeton left the door. The first half of their drive was passed in silence; and almost the first words they exchanged were as they finally drew near to a space of enclosed ground, beyond which, through the trees at its farther extremity, they caught a glimpse of a turn in the river. Miss Hofmann involuntarily pulled up.

The sun had sunk low, and the cloudless western sky glowed with rosy yellow. The trees which concealed the view flung over the grass a great screen of shadow, which reached out into the road. Between their scattered stems gleamed the broad white current of the Hudson. Our friends both knew the spot. Mason had seen it from a boat, when one morning a gentleman in the neighborhood, thinking to do him a kindness, had invited him to take a short sail; and with Miss Hofmann it had long been a frequent resort.

"How beautiful!" she said, as the phaeton stopped.

"Yes, if it was n't for those trees," said Ferdinand. "They conceal the best part of the view."

"I should rather say they indicate it," answered his companion. "From here they conceal it; but they suggest to you to make your way in, and lose yourself behind them, and enjoy the prospect in privacy."

"But you can't take a vehicle in."

"No: there is only a footpath, although I have ridden in. One of these days, when you're stronger, you must drive to this point, and get out, and walk over to the bank."

Mason was silent a moment,—a moment during which he felt in his limbs the tremor of a bold resolution. "I noticed the place the day I went out on the water with Mr. McCarthy. I immediately marked it as my own. The bank is quite high, and the trees make a little amphitheatre on its summit. I think there's a bench."

"Yes, there are two benches," said Caroline.

"Suppose, then, we try it now," said Mason, with an effort.

"But you can never walk over that meadow. You see it's broken ground. And, at all events, I can't consent to your going alone."

"That, madam," said Ferdinand, rising to his feet in the phaeton, "is a piece of folly I should never think of proposing. Yonder is a house, and in it there are people. Can't we drive

thither, and place the horse in their custody?"

"Nothing is more easy, if you insist upon it. The house is occupied by a German family with a couple of children, who are old friends of mine. When I come here on horseback they always clamor for 'coppers.' From their little garden the walk is shorter."

So Miss Hofmann turned the horse toward the cottage, which stood at the head of a lane, a few yards from the road. A little boy and girl, with bare heads and bare feet,—the former members very white and the latter very black,—came out to meet her. Caroline greeted them good-humoredly in German. The girl, who was the elder, consented to watch the horse, while the boy volunteered to show the visitors the shortest way to the river. Mason reached the point in question without great fatigue, and found a prospect which would have repaid even greater trouble. To the right and to the left, a hundred feet below them, stretched the broad channel of the seaward-shifting waters. In the distance rose the gentle masses of the Catskills with all the intervening region vague and neutral in the gathering twilight. A faint odor of coolness came up to their faces from the stream below.

"You can sit down," said the little boy, doing the honors.

"Yes, Colonel, sit down," said Caroline. "You've already been on your feet too much."

Ferdinand obediently seated himself, unable to deny that he was glad to do so. Miss Hofmann released from her grasp the skirts which she had gathered up in her passage from the phaeton, and strolled to the edge of the cliff, where she stood for some moments talking with her little guide. Mason could only hear that she was speaking German. After the lapse of a few moments Miss Hofmann turned back, still talking—or rather listening—to the child.

"He's very pretty," she said in French, as she stopped before Ferdinand.

Mason broke into a laugh. "To think," said he, "that that little youngster should forbid us the use of two languages! Do you speak French, my child?"

"No," said the boy, sturdily, "I speak German."

"Ah, there I can't follow you!"

The child stared a moment, and then replied, with pardonable irrelevancy, "I'll show you the way down to the water."

"There I can't follow you either. I hope *you*'ll not go, Miss Hofmann," added the young man, observing a movement on Caroline's part.

"Is it hard?" she asked of the child.

"No, it's easy."

"Will I tear my dress?"

The child shook his head; and Caroline descended the bank under his guidance.

As some moments elapsed before she reappeared, Ferdinand ventured to the edge of the cliff, and looked down. She was sitting on a rock on the narrow margin of sand, with her hat in her lap, twisting the feather in her fingers. In a few moments it seemed to Ferdinand that he caught the tones of her voice, wafted upward as if she were gently singing. He listened intently, and at last succeeded in distinguishing several words; they were German. "Confound her German!" thought the young man. Suddenly Miss Hofmann rose from her seat, and, after a short interval, reappeared on the platform. "What did you find down there?" asked Ferdinand, almost savagely.

"Nothing, — a little strip of a beach and a pile of stones."

"You *have* torn your dress," said Mason.

Miss Hofmann surveyed her drapery. "Where, if you please?"

"There, in front." And Mason extended his walking-stick, and inserted it into the injured fold of muslin. There was a certain graceless *brusquerie* in the movement which attracted Miss Hofmann's attention.

She looked at her companion, and, seeing that his face was discomposed, fancied that he was annoyed at having been compelled to wait.

"Thank you," she said; "it's easily mended. And now suppose we go back."

"No, not yet," said Ferdinand. "We have plenty of time."

"Plenty of time to catch cold," said Miss Hofmann, kindly.

Mason had planted his stick where he had let it fall on withdrawing it from contact with his companion's skirts, and stood leaning against it, with his eyes on the young girl's face. "What if I do catch cold?" he asked abruptly.

"Come, don't talk nonsense," said Miss Hofmann.

"I never was more serious in my life." And, pausing a moment, he drew a couple of steps nearer. She had gathered her shawl closely about her, and stood with her arms lost in it, holding her elbows. "I don't mean that quite literally," Mason continued. "I wish to get well, on the whole. But there are moments when this perpetual self-coddling seems beneath the dignity of man, and I'm tempted to purchase one short hour of enjoyment, of happiness, at the cost — well, at the cost of my life if necessary!"

This was a franker speech than Ferdinand had yet made; the reader may estimate his habitual reserve. Miss Hofmann must have been somewhat surprised, and even slightly puzzled. But it was plain that he expected a rejoinder.

"I don't know what temptation you may have had," she answered, smiling; "but I confess that I can think of none in your present circumstances likely to involve the great sacrifice you speak of. What you say, Colonel Mason, is half —"

"Half what?"

"Half ungrateful. Aunt Maria flatters herself that she has made existence as easy and as peaceful for you — as stupid, if you like — as it can possibly be for a — a clever man."

And now, after all, to accuse her of introducing temptations."

"Your aunt Maria is the best of women, Miss Hofmann," said Mason. "But I'm not a clever man. I'm deplorably weak-minded. Very little things excite me. Very small pleasures are gigantic temptations. I would give a great deal, for instance, to stay here with you for half an hour."

It is a delicate question whether Miss Hofmann now ceased to be perplexed; whether she discerned in the young man's accents—it was his tone, his attitude, his eyes that were fully significant, rather than his words—an intimation of that sublime and simple truth in the presence of which a wise woman puts off coquetry and prudery, and stands invested with perfect charity. But charity is nothing if not discreet; and Miss Hofmann may very well have effected the little transaction I speak of, and yet have remained, as she did remain, gracefully wrapped in her shawl, with the same serious smile on her face. Ferdinand's heart was thumping under his waistcoat; the words in which he might tell her that he loved her were fluttering there like frightened birds in a storm-shaken cage. Whether his lips would form them or not depended on the next words she uttered. On the faintest sign of defiance or of impatience he would really give her something to coquet withal. I repeat that I do not undertake to follow Miss Hofmann's feelings; I only know that her words were those of a woman of great instincts. "My dear Colonel Mason," she said, "I wish we might remain here the whole evening. The moments are quite too pleasant to be wantonly sacrificed. I simply put you on your conscience. If you believe that you can safely do so,—that you'll not have some dreadful chill in consequence,—let us by all means stay awhile. If you do not so believe, let us go back to the carriage. There is no good reason, that I see, for our behaving like children."

If Miss Hofmann apprehended a scene,—I do not assert that she did,

—she was saved. Mason extracted from her words a delicate assurance that he could afford to wait. "You're an angel, Miss Hofmann," he said, as a sign that this kindly assurance had been taken. "I think we had better go back."

Miss Hofmann accordingly led the way along the path, and Ferdinand slowly followed. A man who has submitted to a woman's wisdom generally feels bound to persuade himself that he has surrendered at discretion. I suppose it was in this spirit that Mason said to himself as he walked along, "Well, I got what I wanted."

The next morning he was again an invalid. He woke up with symptoms which as yet he had scarcely felt at all; and he was obliged to acknowledge the bitter truth that, small as it was, his adventure had exceeded his strength. The walk, the evening air, the dampness of the spot, had combined to produce a violent attack of fever. As soon as it became plain that, in vulgar terms, he was "in for it," he took his heart in his hands and succumbed. As his condition grew worse, he was fortunately relieved from the custody of this valuable organ, with all it contained of hopes delayed and broken projects, by several intervals of prolonged unconsciousness.

For three weeks he was a very sick man. For a couple of days his recovery was doubted of. Mrs. Mason attended him with inexhaustible patience and with the solicitude of real affection. She was resolved that greedy Death should not possess himself, through any fault of hers, of a career so full of bright possibilities and of that active gratitude which a good-natured elderly woman would relish, as she felt that of her *protégé* to be. Her vigils were finally rewarded. One fine morning poor long-silent Ferdinand found words to tell her that he was better. His recovery was very slow, however, and it ceased several degrees below the level from which he had originally fallen. He was thus twice a convalescent,—a sufficiently miserable fellow. He professed to be very much

surprised to find himself still among the living. He remained silent and grave, with a newly contracted fold in his forehead, like a man honestly perplexed at the vagaries of destiny. "It must be," he said to Mrs. Mason,—"it must be that I am reserved for great things."

In order to insure absolute quiet in the house, Ferdinand learned Miss Hofmann had removed herself to the house of a friend, at a distance of some five miles. On the first day that the young man was well enough to sit in his arm-chair Mrs. Mason spoke of her niece's return, which was fixed for the morrow. "She will want very much to see you," she said. "When she comes, may I bring her into your room?"

"Good heavens, no!" said Ferdinand, to whom the idea was very disagreeable. He met her accordingly at dinner, three days later. He left his room at the dinner hour, in company with Dr. Knight, who was taking his departure. In the hall they encountered Mrs. Mason, who invited the Doctor to remain, in honor of his patient's reappearance in society. The Doctor hesitated a moment, and, as he did so, Ferdinand heard Miss Hofmann's step descending the stair. He turned towards her just in time to catch on her face the vanishing of a glance of intelligence. As Mrs. Mason's back was against the staircase, her glance was evidently meant for Knight. He excused himself on the plea of an engagement, to Mason's regret, while the latter greeted the younger lady. Mrs. Mason proposed another day,—the following Sunday; the Doctor assented, and it was not till some time later that Ferdinand found himself wondering why Miss Hofmann should have forbidden him to remain. He rapidly perceived that during the period of their separation this young lady had lost none of her charms; on the contrary, they were more irresistible than ever. It seemed to Mason, moreover, that they were bound together by a certain pensive gentleness, a tender, submissive look, which he had hitherto failed to observe. Mrs. Mason's

own remarks assured him that he was not the victim of an illusion.

"I wonder what is the matter with Caroline," she said. "If it were not that she tells me that she never was better, I should believe she is feeling unwell. I've never seen her so simple and gentle. She looks like a person who has a great fright,—a fright not altogether unpleasant."

"She has been staying in a house full of people," said Mason. "She has been excited, and amused, and pre-occupied; she returns to you and me (excuse the juxtaposition,—it exists)—a kind of reaction asserts itself." Ferdinand's explanation was ingenious rather than plausible.

Mrs. Mason had a better one. "I have an impression," she said, "George Stapleton, the second of the sons, is an old admirer of Caroline's. It's hard to believe that he could have been in the house with her for a fortnight without renewing his suit, in some form or other."

Ferdinand was not made uneasy, for he had seen and talked with Mr. George Stapleton,—a young man very good-looking, very good-natured, very clever, very rich, and very unworthy, as he conceived, of Miss Hofmann. "You don't mean to say that your niece has listened to him," he answered, calmly enough.

"Listened, yes. He has made himself agreeable, and he has succeeded in making an impression,—a temporary impression," added Mrs. Mason with a business-like air.

"I can't believe it," said Ferdinand.

"Why not? He's a very nice fellow."

"Yes,—yes," said Mason, "very nice indeed. He's very rich too." And here the talk was interrupted by Caroline's entrance.

On Sunday the two ladies went to church. It was not till after they had gone that Ferdinand left his room. He came into the little parlor, took up a book, and felt something of the stir of his old intellectual life. Would he ever again know what it was to work?

In the course of an hour the ladies came in, radiant with devotional millinery. Mrs. Mason soon went out again, leaving the others together. Miss Hofmann asked Ferdinand what he had been reading; and he was thus led to declare that he really believed he should, after all, get the use of his head again. She listened with all the respect which an intelligent woman who leads an idle life necessarily feels for a clever man when he consents to make her in some degree the confidant of his intellectual purposes. Quickened by her delicious sympathy, her grave attention, and her intelligent questions, he was led to unbosom himself of several of his dearest convictions and projects. It was easy that from this point the conversation should advance to matters of belief and hope in general. Before he knew it, it had done so; and he had thus the great satisfaction of discussing with the woman on whom of all others his selfish and personal happiness was most dependent those great themes in whose expansive magnitude persons and pleasures and passions are absorbed and extinguished, and in whose austere effulgence the brightest divinities of earth remit their shining. Serious passions are a good preparation for the highest kinds of speculation. Although Ferdinand was urging no suit whatever upon his companion, and consciously, at least, making use in no degree of the emotion which accompanied her presence, it is certain that, as they formed themselves, his conceptions were the clearer for being the conceptions of a man in love. And, as for Miss Hofmann, her attention could not, to all appearances, have been more lively, nor her perception more delicate, if the atmosphere of her own intellect had been purified by the sacred fires of a responsive passion.

Knight duly made his appearance at dinner, and proved himself once more the entertaining gentleman whom our friends had long since learned to appreciate. But Mason, fresh from his contest with morals and metaphysics,

was forcibly struck with the fact that he was one of those men from whom these sturdy beggars receive more kicks than halfpence. He was nevertheless obliged to admit, that, if he was not a man of principles, he was thoroughly a man of honor. After dinner the company adjourned to the piazza, where, in the course of half an hour, the Doctor proposed to Miss Hofmann to take a turn in the grounds. All around the lawn there wound a narrow footpath, concealed from view in spots by clusters of shubbery. Ferdinand and his hostess sat watching their retreating figures as they slowly measured the sinuous strip of gravel; Miss Hofmann's light dress and the Doctor's white waistcoat gleaming at intervals through the dark verdure. At the end of twenty minutes they returned to the house. The Doctor came back only to make his bow and to take his departure; and, when he had gone, Miss Hofmann retired to her own room. The next morning she mounted her horse, and rode over to see the friend with whom she had stayed during Mason's fever. Ferdinand saw her pass his window, erect in the saddle, with her horse scattering the gravel with his nervous steps. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Mason came into the room, sat down by the young man, made her habitual inquiries as to his condition, and then paused in such a way as that he instantly felt that she had something to tell him. "You've something to tell me," he said; "what is it?"

Mrs. Mason blushed a little, and laughed. "I was first made to promise to keep it a secret," she said. "If I'm so transparent now that I have leave to tell it, what should I be if I had n't? Guess."

Ferdinand shook his head peremptorily. "I give it up."

"Caroline is engaged."

"To whom?"

"Not to Mr. Stapleton, — to Dr. Knight."

Ferdinand was silent a moment; but he neither changed color nor

dropped his eyes. Then, at last, "Did she wish you not to tell me?" he asked.

"She wished me to tell no one. But I prevailed upon her to let me tell *you*."

"Thank you," said Ferdinand with a little bow — and an immense irony.

"It's a great surprise," continued Mrs. Mason. "I never suspected it. And there I was talking about Mr. Stapleton! I don't see how they have managed it. Well, I suppose it's for the best. But it seems odd that Caroline should have refused so many superior offers, to put up at last with Dr. Knight."

Ferdinand had felt for an instant as if the power of speech was deserting him; but volition nailed it down with a great muffled hammer-blow.

"She might do worse," he said mechanically.

Mrs. Mason glanced at him as if struck by the sound of his voice. "You're not surprised, then?"

"I hardly know. I never fancied there was anything between them, and yet, now that I look back, there has been nothing against it. They have talked of each other neither too much nor too little. Upon my soul, they're an accomplished couple!" Glancing back at his friend's constant reserve and self-possession, Ferdinand — strange as it may seem — could not repress a certain impulse of sympathetic admiration. He had had no vulgar rival. "Yes," he repeated gravely, "she might do worse."

"I suppose she might. He's poor, but he's clever; and I'm sure I hope to Heaven he loves her!"

Ferdinand said nothing.

"May I ask," he resumed at length, "whether they became engaged yesterday, on that walk around the lawn?"

"No; it would be fine if they had, under our very noses! It was all done while Caroline was at the Stapletons'. It was agreed between them yesterday that she should tell me at once."

"And when are they to be married?"

"In September, if possible. Caroline told me to tell you that she counts upon your staying for the wedding."

"Staying where?" asked Mason, with a little nervous laugh.

"Staying here, of course, — in the house."

Ferdinand looked his hostess full in the eyes, taking her hand as he did so. "The funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables."

"Ah, hold your tongue!" cried Mrs. Mason, pressing his hand. "How can you be so horrible? When Caroline leaves me, Ferdinand, I shall be quite alone. The tie which binds us together will be very much slackened by her marriage. I can't help thinking that it was never very close, when I consider that I've had no part in the most important step of her life. I don't complain. I suppose it's natural enough. Perhaps it's the fashion, — come in with striped petticoats and pea-jackets. Only it makes me feel like an old woman. It removes me twenty years at a bound from my own engagement, and the day I burst out crying on my mother's neck because your uncle had told a young girl I knew, that he thought I had beautiful eyes. Now-a-days I suppose they tell the young ladies themselves, and have them cry on their own necks. It's a great saving of time. But I shall miss Caroline all the same; and then, Ferdinand, I shall make a great deal of you."

"The more the better," said Ferdinand, with the same laugh; and at this moment Mrs. Mason was called away.

Ferdinand had not been a soldier for nothing. He had received a heavy blow, and he resolved to bear it like a man. He refused to allow himself a single moment of self-compassion. On the contrary, he spared himself none of the hard names offered by his passionate vocabulary. For not guessing Caroline's secret, he was perhaps excusable. Women were all inscrutable, and this one especially so. But Knight was a man like himself, — a man whom he es-

teemed, but whom he was loath to credit with a deeper and more noiseless current of feeling than his own, for his own was no babbling brook, betraying its course through green leaves. Knight had loved modestly and decently, but frankly and heartily, like a man who was not ashamed of what he was doing, and if he had not found it out it was his own fault. What else had he to do? He had been a besotted day-dreamer, while his friend had simply been a genuine lover. He deserved his injury, and he would bear it in silence. He had been unable to get well on an illusion; he would now try getting well on a truth. This was stern treatment, the reader will admit, likely to kill if it did not cure.

Miss Hofmann was absent for several hours. At dinner-time she had not returned, and Mrs. Mason and the young man accordingly sat down without her. After dinner Ferdinand went into the little parlor, quite indifferent as to how soon he met her. Seeing or not seeing her, time hung equally heavy. Shortly after her companions had risen from table, she rode up to the door, dismounted, tired and hungry, passed directly into the dining-room, and sat down to eat in her habit. In half an hour she came out, and, crossing the hall on her way up stairs, saw Mason in the parlor. She turned round, and, gathering up her long skirts with one hand, while she held a little sweet-cake to her lips with the other, stopped at the door to bid him good day. He left his chair, and went towards her. Her face wore a somewhat weary smile.

"So you're going to be married," he began abruptly.

Miss Hofmann assented with a slight movement of her head.

"I congratulate you. Excuse me if I don't do it with the last grace. I feel all I dare to feel."

"Don't be afraid," said Caroline, smiling, and taking a bite from her cake.

"I'm not sure that it's not more unexpected than even such things have

a right to be. There's no doubt about it?"

"None whatever."

"Well, Knight's a very good fellow. I have not seen him yet," he pursued, as Caroline was silent. "I don't know that I'm in any hurry to see him. But I mean to talk to him. I mean to tell him that if he does not do his duty by you, I shall —"

"Well?"

"I shall remind him of it."

"O, I shall do that," said Miss Hofmann.

Ferdinand looked at her gravely. "By Heaven! you know," he cried with intensity, "it must be either one thing or the other."

"I don't understand you."

"O, I understand myself. You're not a woman to be thrown away, Miss Hofmann."

Caroline made a gesture of impatience. "I don't understand you," she repeated. "You must excuse me. I'm very tired." And she went rapidly up stairs.

On the following day Ferdinand had an opportunity to make his compliments to the Doctor. "I don't congratulate you on doing it," he said, "so much as on the way you've done it."

"What do you know about the way?" asked Knight.

"Nothing whatever. That's just it. You took good care of that. And you're to be married in the autumn?"

"I hope so. Very quietly, I suppose. The parson to do it, and Mrs. Mason and my mother and you to see it's done properly." And the Doctor put his hand on Ferdinand's shoulder.

"O, I'm the last person to choose," said Mason. "If he were to omit anything, I should take good care not to cry out." It is often said, that, next to great joy, no state of mind is so frolicsome as great distress. It was in virtue of this truth, I suppose, that Ferdinand was able to be facetious. He kept his spirits. He talked and smiled and lounged about with the same deferential languor as before. During the

interval before the time appointed for the wedding it was agreed between the parties interested that Miss Hofmann should go over and spend a few days with her future mother-in-law, where she might partake more freely and privately than at home of the pleasure of her lover's company. She was absent a week; a week during which Ferdinand was thrown entirely upon his hostess for entertainment and diversion,—things he had a very keen sense of needing. There were moments when it seemed to him that he was living by mere force of will, and that, if he loosened the screws for a single instant, he would sink back upon his bed again, and never leave it. He had forbidden himself to think of Caroline, and had prescribed a course of meditation upon that other mistress, his first love, with whom he had long since exchanged pledges,—she of a hundred names,—work, letters, philosophy, fame. But, after Caroline had gone, it was supremely difficult not to think of her. Even in absence she was supremely conspicuous. The most that Ferdinand could do was to take refuge in books,—an immense number of which he now read, fiercely, passionately, voraciously,—in conversation with Mrs. Mason, and in such society as he found in his path. Mrs. Mason was a great gossip,—a gossip on a scale so magnificent as to transform the foible into a virtue. A gossip, moreover, of imagination, dealing with the future as well as the present and the past,—with a host of delightful half-possibilities, as well as with stale hyper-verities. With her, then, Ferdinand talked of his own future, into which she entered with the most outspoken and intelligent sympathy. “A man,” he declared, “could n't do better; and a man certainly would do worse.” Mrs. Mason arranged a European tour and residence for her nephew, in the manner of one who knew her ground. Caroline once married, she herself would go abroad, and fix herself in one of the several capitals in which an American widow with an easy income may contrive to

support existence. She would make her dwelling a base of supplies—a *pied à terre*—for Ferdinand, who should take his time to it, and visit every accessible spot in Europe and the East. She would leave him free to go and come as he pleased, and to live as he listed; and I may say that, thanks to Mrs. Mason's observation of Continental manners, this broad allowance covered in her view quite as much as it did in poor Ferdinand's, who had never been out of his own country. All that she would ask of him would be to show himself say twice a year in her drawing-room, and to tell her stories of what he had seen; that drawing-room which she already saw in her mind's eye,—a compact little *entresol* with tapestry hangings in the doorways and a coach-house in the court attached. Mrs. Mason was not a severe moralist; but she was quite too sensible a woman to wish to demoralize her nephew, and to persuade him to trifle with his future,—that future of which the war had already made light, in its own grim fashion. Nay, she loved him; she thought him the cleverest, the most promising, of young men. She looked to the day when his name would be on men's lips, and it would be a great piece of good fortune to have very innocently married his uncle. Herself a great observer of men and manners, she wished to give him advantages which had been sterile in her own case.

In the way of society, Ferdinand made calls with his hostess, went out twice to dine, and caused Mrs. Mason herself to entertain company at dinner. He presided on these occasions with distinguished good grace. It happened, moreover, that invitations had been out some days for a party at the Stapletons',—Miss Hofmann's friends,—and that, as there was to be no dancing, Ferdinand boldly announced his intention of going thither. “Who knows?” he said; “it may do me more good than harm. We can go late, and come away early.” Mrs. Mason doubted of the wisdom of the act; but she finally as-

sented, and prepared herself. It was late when they left home, and when they arrived the rooms — rooms of exceptional vastness — were at their fullest. Mason received on this his first appearance in society a most flattering welcome, and in a very few moments found himself in exclusive possession of Miss Edith Stapleton, Caroline's particular friend. This young lady has had no part in our story, because our story is perforce short, and condemned to pick and choose its constituent elements. With the least bit wider compass we might long since have whispered to the reader, that Miss Stapleton — who was a charming girl — had conceived a decided preference for our Ferdinand over all other men whomsoever. That Ferdinand was utterly ignorant of the circumstance is our excuse for passing it by; and we linger upon it, therefore, only long enough to suggest that the young girl must have been very happy at this particular moment.

"Is Miss Hofmann here?" Mason asked as he accompanied her into an adjoining room.

"Do you call that being here?" said Miss Stapleton, looking across the apartment. Mason, too, looked across.

There he beheld Miss Hofmann, full-robed in white, standing fronted by a semicircle of no less than five gentlemen, — all good-looking and splendid. Her head and shoulders rose serene from the *bouillonnement* of her beautiful dress, and she looked and listened with that half-abstracted air which is pardonable in a woman beset by half a dozen admirers. When Caroline's eyes fell upon her friend, she stared a moment, surprised, and then made him the most gracious bow in the world, — a bow so gracious that her little circle half divided itself to let it pass, and looked around to see where the deuce it was going. Taking advantage of this circumstance, Miss Hofmann advanced several steps. Ferdinand went towards her, and there, in sight of a hundred men and as many women, she gave him her hand, and smiled upon

him with extraordinary sweetness. They went back together to Miss Stapleton, and Caroline made him sit down, she and her friend placing themselves on either side. For half an hour Ferdinand had the honor of engrossing the attention of the two most charming girls present, — and, thanks to this distinction, indeed the attention of the whole company. After which the two young ladies had him introduced successively to every maiden and matron in the assembly in the least remarkable for loveliness or wit. Ferdinand rose to the level of the occasion, and conducted himself with unprecedented gallantry. Upon others he made, of course, the best impression, but to himself he was an object almost of awe. I am compelled to add, however, that he was obliged to fortify himself with repeated draughts of wine; and that even with the aid of this artificial stimulant he was unable to conceal from Mrs. Mason and his physician that he was looking far too much like an invalid to be properly where he was.

"Was there ever anything like the avidity of these dreadful girls?" said Mrs. Mason to the Doctor. "They'll let a man swoon at their feet sooner than abridge a *tête-à-tête* that amuses them. Then they'll have up another. Look at little Miss McCarthy, yonder, with Ferdinand and George Stapleton before her. She's got them contradicting each other, and she looks like a Roman fast lady at the circus. What does she care so long as she makes her evening? They like a man to look as if he were going to die, — it's interesting."

Knight went over to his friend, and told him sternly that it was high time he should be at home and in bed. "Your're looking horribly," he added shrewdly, as Ferdinand resisted.

"You're *not* looking horribly, Colonel Mason," said Miss McCarthy, a very audacious little person, overhearing this speech.

"It is n't a matter of taste, madam," said the Doctor, angrily; "it's a fact." And he led away his patient.

Ferdinand insisted that he had not hurt himself, that, on the contrary, he was feeling uncommonly well; but his face contradicted him. He continued for two or three days more to play at "feeling well," with a courage worthy of a better cause. Then at last he let disease have its way. He settled himself on his pillows, and fingered his watch, and began to wonder how many revolutions he would still witness of those exquisite little needles. The Doctor came, and gave him a sound rating for what he called his imprudence. Ferdinand heard him out patiently; and then assured him that prudence or imprudence had nothing to do with it; that death had taken fast hold of him, and that now his only concern was to make easy terms with his captor. In the course of the same day he sent for a lawyer and altered his will. He had no known relatives, and his modest patrimony stood bequeathed to a gentleman of his acquaintance who had no real need of it. He now divided it into two unequal portions, the smaller of which he devised to William Bowles, Mrs. Mason's man-servant and his personal attendant; and the larger—which represented a considerable sum—to Horace Knight. He informed Mrs. Mason of these arrangements, and was pleased to have her approval.

From this moment his strength began rapidly to ebb, and the shattered fragments of his long-resisting will floated down its shallow current into dissolution. It was useless to attempt to talk, to beguile the interval, to watch the signs, or to count the hours. A constant attendant was established at his side, and Mrs. Mason appeared only at infrequent moments. The poor woman felt that her heart was broken, and spent a great deal of time in weeping. Miss Hofmann remained, naturally, at Mrs. Knight's. "As far as I can judge," Horace had said, "it will be a matter of a week. But it's the most extraordinary case I ever heard of. The man was steadily getting well." On the fifth day he had driven

Miss Hofmann home, at her suggestion that it was no more than decent that she should give the young man some little sign of sympathy. Horace went up to Ferdinand's bedside, and found the poor fellow in the languid middle condition between sleeping and waking in which he had passed the last forty-eight hours. "Colonel," he asked gently, "do you think you could see Caroline?"

For all answer, Ferdinand opened his eyes. Horace went out, and led his companion back into the darkened room. She came softly up to the bedside, stood looking down for a moment at the sick man, and then stooped over him.

"I thought I'd come and make you a little visit," she said. "Does it disturb you?"

"Not in the least," said Mason, looking her steadily in the eyes. "Not half as much as it would have done a week ago. Sit down."

"Thank you. Horace won't let me. I'll come again."

"You'll not have another chance," said Ferdinand. "I'm not good for more than two days yet. Tell them to go out. I wish to see you alone. I would n't have sent for you, but, now that you're here, I might as well take advantage of it."

"Have you anything particular to say?" asked Knight, kindly.

"O, come," said Mason, with a smile which he meant to be good-natured, but which was only ghastly; "you're not going to be jealous of me at this time of day."

Knight looked at Miss Hofmann for permission, and then left the room with the nurse. But a minute had hardly elapsed before Miss Hofmann hurried into the adjoining apartment, with her face pale and discomposed.

"Go to him!" she exclaimed. "He's dying!"

When they reached him he was dead.

In the course of a few days his will was opened, and Knight came to the knowledge of his legacy. "He was a good, generous fellow," he said to

Mrs. Mason and Miss Hofmann, "and I shall never be satisfied that he might n't have recovered. It was a most extraordinary case." He was considerate enough of his audience to abstain from adding that he would give a great deal to have been able to make an au-

topsy. Miss Hofmann's wedding was, of course, not deferred. She was married in September, "very quietly." It seemed to her lover, in the interval, that she was very silent and thoughtful. But this was certainly natural under the circumstances.

DOCTOR MOLKE'S FRIENDS.

CHAPTER III.

THE MISSIONARY'S STORY.

AFTER we had reached the missionary's hut, the storm seemed to shriek more fiercely than before, and the wind pressed and beat upon it with such violence, that the slender timbers fairly groaned and shivered; and as the hut was merely stuck upon the rock, I thought we stood a fair chance of going over at any moment, or of being carried up and tossed about among the clouds that were sailing in from the open sea and breaking into phantom shapes among the crags and cliffs. Groups of native dogs crouched among the rocks, crying pitiously, under the cold pelting of the storm; and as the night wore on, great showers of hail came rattling against the window-pane; and the wind rose steadily, and the spray flew still more wildly over the ghostly icebergs in the sea, and the clouds broke into more fantastic shapes, and the icebergs and the cliffs, and everything in sight, grew more weird, and seemed more and more unreal.

But no darkness greater than the darkness of a gloomy midday sky ever came; and the time of night (the time we call night at home) was measured off upon the dial-plate of a little Dutch clock that ticked against the wall, and told off the seconds as they passed. And this little Dutch clock, with its

long chains and weights of brass dangling down (as if they were arms and legs feeling for something real to rest upon), appeared to have a mind of its own upon the situation; for it ticked away under protest, as it were, and as if it would have you know that there was no occasion for ticking seconds there; and when midnight came, it set off with a preliminary rumble in its bowels and a gurgle in its throat (a sort of warning to take notice now and mind, or 't would be the worse for you), and sang out with a sharp, cracked voice, "Where 's the use, where 's the use, where 's the use, will you tell me, will you tell me, will you tell me, striking midnight, striking midnight, striking midnight, in the daylight, in the daylight, in the daylight?"—ending with another rumble in its bowels, and another gurgle in its throat; and after that it subsided once more into ticking under protest.

And all through this strange night the missionary sat before me, by the fire, talking of himself,—at broken intervals during the first half-hour, more constantly the second, and afterward all the time; and as he talked, the winds and clouds and rattling hail, and the wild and troubled sea, were quite forgotten by me, and all thought of phantom things and phantom shapes, and the endless day (that seemed only to be made for Wandering Jews) ceased to trouble my imagination; for I was deeply curious to

learn why this strange man had come to such a place, and he was telling me.

"I was born," began the missionary, "in Copenhagen, and was educated for the law. My family history would not interest you; and it is enough for me, therefore, to say that I had two sisters and three brothers. My brothers were fond of claiming that the Rolfsens were a very ancient family; but I never cared to inquire into the matter, deeming it of little consequence. Besides, I have always observed that those who manifest the most concern for their ancestral dignity have usually the least to boast themselves withal; and, were they wise, they would preserve a prudent silence upon the subject, contenting themselves with the knowledge that they had fathers, without disturbing their minds about their grandfathers, if indeed they ever had any to boast of.

"My father was a native of Bergen, Norway; but when, after the disastrous campaign of Frederick VI., in which he bore a part, Norway was ceded to the Swedish crown, he quitted Bergen, and came to reside with his family in Copenhagen, to which city he was the more attached that he had helped to defend it against the bombardment of the English. There he continued to live under the old flag and king, — and to none other would he own allegiance.

"The fortune of my father was ample for maintaining his family in comfort, and, indeed, in some elegance. His children had the best opportunities of education; and he lived to see his two daughters well and happily married, one of his sons established in the army, another in the civil service, another a merchant, and myself, the youngest, prepared, at least in form, to practise the profession which had been selected for me.

"Between my father and myself there grew up a deep affection; for to that feeling natural between parent and child there was added a great similarity of taste and disposition, and, indeed, of

personal appearance. Those who remembered my father when a young man of my own age declared that I was the exact counterpart of him.

"He saw fit to make me his constant companion; and, when his pursuits or my studies would allow of our being together, he would take me with him, generally with no one else in company, on his walks and rides and boating expeditions. His early life having been passed at the romantic old fishing-town of Bergen, (which nestles, with its quaint houses and bright bay, in a great amphitheatre of mountains,) he was, quite naturally, fond of the sea; and I fully shared his disposition in this, as in all other respects. We often visited the scenes of his boyhood; and it was thus, perhaps, that an early familiarity with the bleak coast and almost arctic climate of Norway prepared me for coming hither, when later in life I sought a resting-place.

"When my legal studies were commenced, I was no longer regular in my attendance at the University; and we arranged our pleasant walks and excursions with a view to my father's convenience and inclination, rather than to the order of my lectures. Nothing in or about the picturesque and dearly loved Copenhagen escaped our attention. Together we strolled, day after day, through the grand saloons of the palace of Christianberg; my father, with earnest enthusiasm, pointing out to me the beauties of the paintings, the excellence of the engravings in that fine collection, and the noble sculptures of the great Thorwaldsen; and he led me to the books which I wished to consult in the immense library, — one of the largest in the world. Together we visited the museum of antiquities, and the schools of art and science in Charlottenburg; and in the pleasant summer evenings, when the twilight lingered long, we walked together in the delightful gardens of the old Rosenberg, or strolled across one or the other of the two bridges which lead to Christianshavn, and thence around by the beautiful church of St. Saviour, with



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